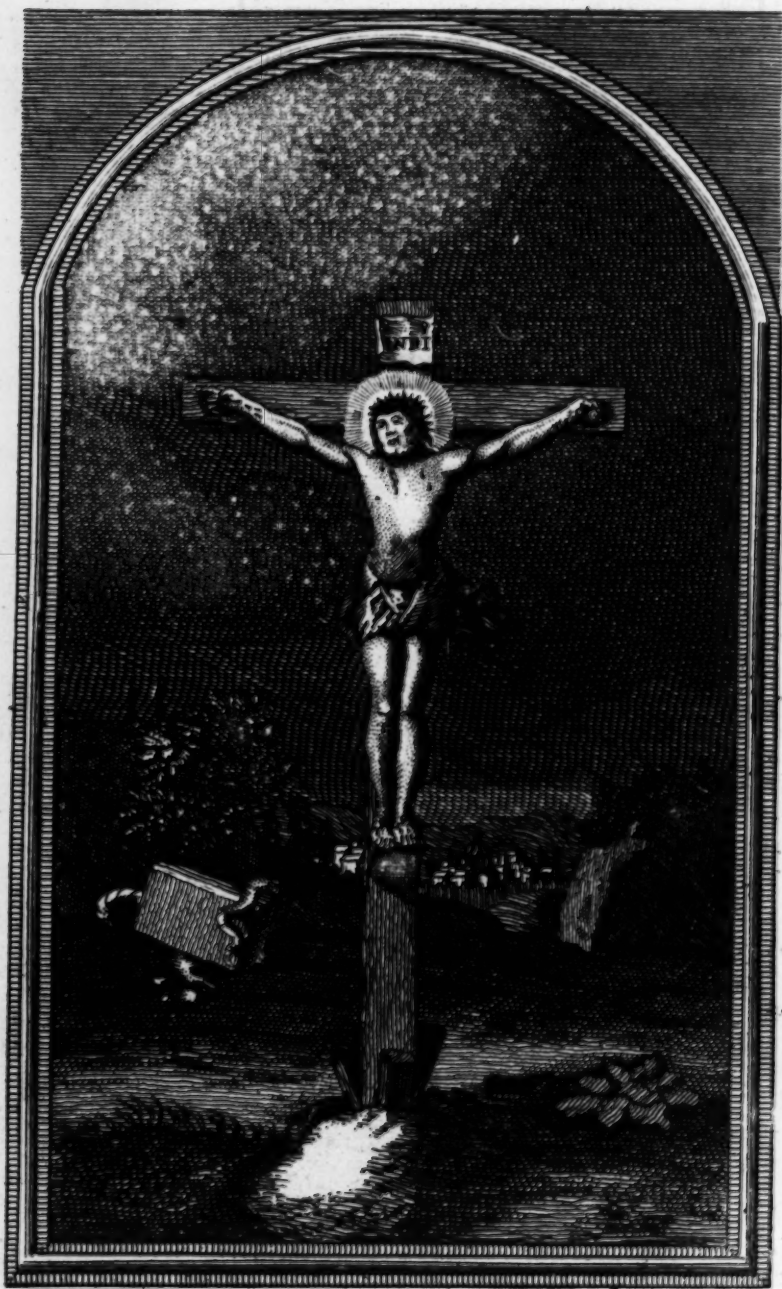
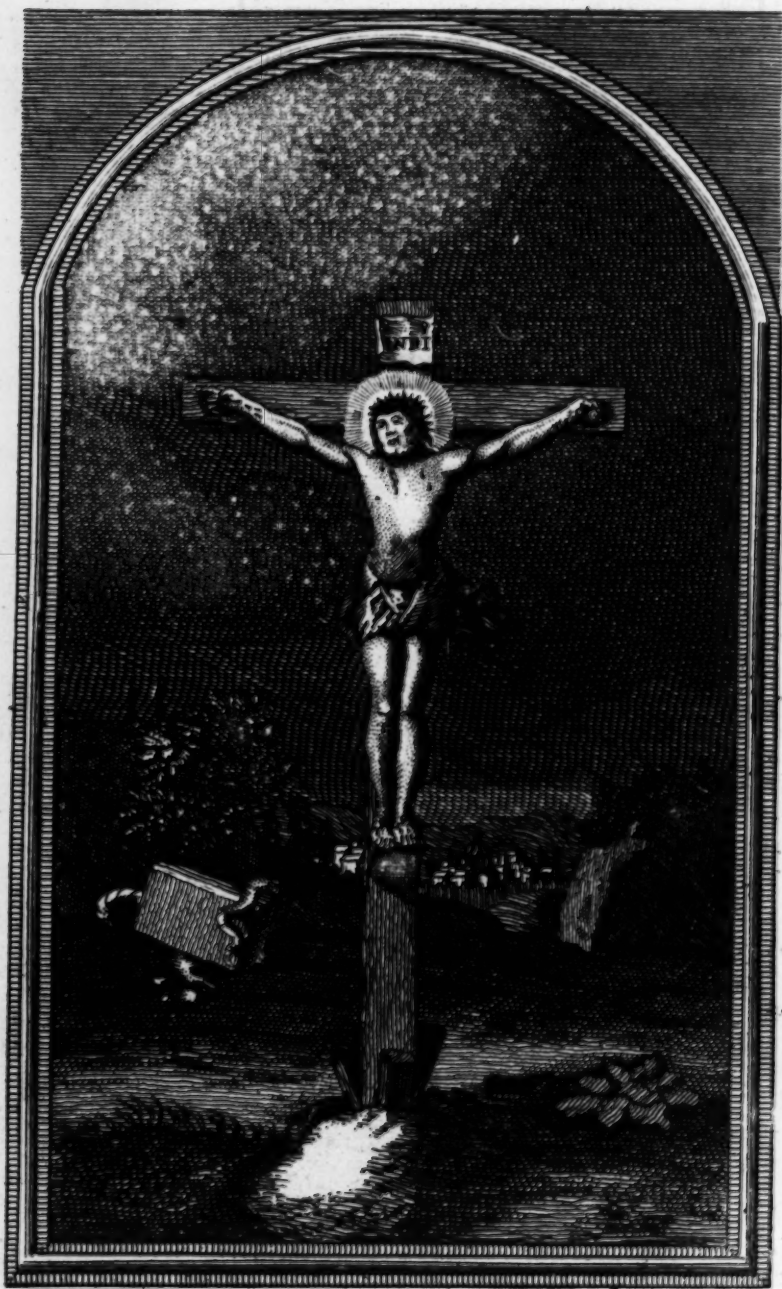




*Our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ
on the Cross.*



*Our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ
on the Cross.*

(The Parents New Year's Gift)
The Christian's Pattern:
 OR,
 I M I T A T I O N
 O F
 J E S U S C H R I S T.

In FOUR BOOKS. K

Containing among other Things,

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| <p>I. CHRIST the true Pattern to be imitated by every Christian.</p> <p>II. The Life of the Spiritual Man; or the Religious Exercises of every true Professor of the Name of Christ.</p> <p>III. Dialogues between Christ and the Disciple; in which</p> | <p>the Doubts and Fears of the pious Soul are declared and removed; with unerring Directions to attain eternal Happiness.</p> <p>IV. The Christian assisted in his Preparations for, and worthy Receiving of the Holy Communion of the LORD'S SUPPER.</p> |
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WITH

REFLECTIONS and OBSERVATIONS on every Chapter, never published in any other Edition of this excellent Treatise.

To which are likewise now added,

MEDITATIONS and PRAYERS for Persons in Sicknefs and Trouble; with HYMNS on various Subjects.

By *THOMAS à KEMPIS.*

To which is prefixed, the Life of the AUTHOR, with an Account of all his WRITINGS. The whole embellish'd with a great Number of Copper Plate Cuts.

L O N D O N :

Printed for W. REEVE, *Fleet-street*, and C. SYMPSON, at the Bible in *Chancery-lane.* MDCCLIII.

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THE PREFACE.

THis Work has raised such a veneration for the name of its Author, that we can say nothing in its favour which will be equal to the notion the whole world has already receiv'd of it. Nor can a man dip into any part of it, without a full recommendation of itself in the least paragraph he can read; for it will speak directly to his heart, in a divine language that will affect him to his advantage, whether he is a saint or a sinner, and say more for itself than we are able to say for it.

We may say it has extended as far as the Gospel, there being no Christian nation that we have heard of, but what has receiv'd it as a work the Author was more than ordinarily assisted in, and the next in piety, spirit, and purity to the Word of God, as it so largely partakes of the spirit and simplicity in which that is deliver'd to us.

The whole Christian world is speaking for it; and as it is known to all men, that it says more for it self than can be said for it, it would bring a loss upon my time if I were to say more, than that this translation of it comes out, to make it speak as near as we can, to the hearts rather than to the ears of men, according to the purity, charity, and uprightness of the intention of its Author; for the work shows, he thought not of the ears, but of the hearts of men only, in the time he was composing it.

Some later translations are fill'd with the gingle that is better fitted to the ears than the heart of those who read 'em, and under such a mixture of things of

The P R E F A C E.

the Translators own interweaving, that the Author is in a manner lost, and the work hardly known to be his.

They have depriv'd the Work of its simplicity, and cast out the holy fire which always found the way to the heart, and warm'd it with the love of God till it had a feeling of the beauty of holiness, and was filling with the spirit of him that wrote it, whose piety will'd nothing but God's honour, whose charity will'd the eternal happiness of all men, and whose humility will'd nothing but that he might be the servant of servants of God, in winning them to an imitation of the life of Jesus Christ.

For the Reflexions upon each chapter, we have no more to say, than that they are kindly intended; they have been of some use to their author; if they may be of any to others, in that he will have his end in making them publick; but if there is any good in them, our divine Kempis is the root from whence it springs.

As every Reader desires to know something more of the Author he is reading, than that such a man was, I now offer the account I have receiv'd of him, having no reason to call the truth of it in question.

About the year 1380 he was born at Kempen, a little town in the territory of Cologne, of mean but very pious parents. The baptismal name of his father was John, and of his mother Gertrude; but their surname was Hammerkin, or Hammerlein.

About his thirteenth year, they sent him to Deventer, a University of the province of Over-Yssel, where he studied in the House of the Clerks, under the care of Florentius their Rector, who, from the sincerity and simplicity of all his actions, adopted him his son.

When Kempis was about twenty years old, Florentius

The P R E F A C E.

rentius was taken for death, and making a long discourse to Kempis upon his future conduct, it raised a desire in him for retiring from the world, that he might give himself wholly to the more immediate service of God.

Upon this he went to a little College of Regular Canons of the Order of St. Augustine, at the Mount of St. Agnes, near the town of Zwoll, in the same province of Over-Yssel, to which house he was recommended for a member, by a letter which was written by Florentius, before his death.

In the year 1400 he went to that house, and his only brother being the Prior at that time, he receiv'd him very joyfully; and there he fix'd, and was five years upon the trial, whether it was a state of life to which he could conform with the whole heart. In the sixth year he took the habit of that Order upon him, and on the 10th of June in the seventh year, he enter'd into the vows of the Order.

After this he ever observed the 10th day of June as a day of the greatest happiness to him; and as the day came, he still renew'd the vows he had enter'd into, with fresh resolutions of following our Lord to his death, and despising the world for his sake. He labour'd to live to his profession in the greatest purity, and in the temptations by which he was tried, (as he himself says) he made silence his friend, labour his companion, and prayer his auxiliary.

Here his life he pass'd in singular piety, and continual endeavours to imitate the humility of a crucified Saviour, paying the most exact obedience to his superiors, and shining in the highest charity and brotherly affection for those he was in community with.

It being one of the principal employments of the Canon-Regulares of that Congregation, to transcribe

The P R E F A C E.

the Bible, the Works of the Ancients, and treaties of devotion; to this he gave a strict application, and labour'd to engage others in those useful and pious endeavours, of which some remains are still extant, in a large fair Latin Bible, consisting of fourteen Volumes, and some pieces of St. Bernard, transcribed by him, remain to this time.

This was a part of his employment when he was at Deventer, and he labour'd hard in it to discharge his obligation to those teachers he was under in his studies; and what remain'd, it was his custom to cast into the common purse.

In his life, he labour'd to make himself a comforter to the afflicted, an assistant to those that were in temptations; and as he desired for himself, so did he desire the eternal happiness of others, and labour'd by all the ways possible, that they might enter into that endless rest he was labouring for.

In the Church, or Oratory, when he was singing the Psalms, he always stood with his body erect, and, as if he was in a holy rapture, his face was fix'd towards heaven, like one ravish'd with the sweetness of the Psalms he was singing; and by those that were the nearest to him, he was often thought to be in extasy, as he was chanting them forth.

It was often observ'd, his countenance would seem to shine, as if he had been in the glory of that kingdom he was labouring for; and the position of his body always was as if it was ready to fly from the earth in the fire of that divine charity, which seem'd to be always burning within him.

He used to say, the Prayer of our Lord had within it self all the prayers, vows, and praises that had been made from the beginning of the world, and used it in publick and private, with an awe and a reverence that suited with the notion he had of it; and

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The P R E F A C E.

in all dejections, he thought it lifted up the soul as if she was ascending to unite with her God.

His whole conversation was of God and the sacred Writings, and these being the continual subjects of his meditations, if he was in the hearing of worldly occurrences, he seem'd not to know what was said, and behaved as if he had been only in the presence of God; and such was the reputation of his piety, that great numbers from the towns and villages about, were continually coming to him for the comforts that were flowing from his mouth.

Finding his God in his retirement, he always found a way to forsake men, and even those of his own fraternity as well as others, having still a comfort in his retreat that was not to be found in men. This gave being to his usual motto, I sought for rest, but found it not, except in little corners, and in little books; and this he wrote in most of his works; and the painter placed it in a picture of him, that was preserv'd in the house he was of, for above a hundred years after his death.

In the motto he meant, that the true and perfect rest of the soul was not to come out of the things of this world, nor to be found but in that retreat which was to divide her from them; that it was not to be found in great things, but in the small and the more contracted; not in many and large volumes, but in little ones, and but a few; nor in much reading, but in a great deal of recollection, and communion with one's own heart, that in speaking to our own hearts, we may be conversing with God, upon the methods that must be used to bring us wholly to him, that we may be his, and he may be ours, in that blessed union which is to have no end.

When he might be call'd a young man, the Community forced the office of their Sub-Prior upon him; after

The P R E F A C E.

ter that they made him their Treasurer; but that not suiting the spirit he was govern'd by, he obtain'd a discharge from it, but was chosen again for their Sub-Prior, as it more immediately concern'd the spiritual condition of the Community.

He was a little brown man of a strong complexion, and a manly countenance; he had a quick eye, and never used spectacles, tho' he was 92. He died on the 25th of July, in 1471; and it is said, his body was discover'd in an extraordinary manner, upon the 13th of August, new stile, in 1672.

Always labouring to conceal himself, he gave no title to the things of his own writing, but sign'd 'em with his own name, as he did those that he had copied, according to the common form of the copyists; but such of his own works, as it was not possible for him to conceal, were underwritten, the poor Pilgrim. And the Works known to be his, are,

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 The Imitation of Jesus Chr. | 17 Of the Elevation of the |
| 2 The Soliloquy of the Soul. | Mind, to the Search of the |
| 3 A little Garden of Roses. | supreme Good. |
| 4 The Valley of Lilies. | 18 The Consolation of the Poor. |
| 5 Of the three Tabernacles. | 19 Of Mortification. |
| 6 Of true Compunction. | 20 Of Humility. |
| 7 Of the Discipline of Recluses. | 21 Of a good and a peaceable |
| 8 The Erudition of a good | Life. |
| Steward. | 22 The Life of a good Monk. |
| 9 The Hospital of the Poor. | 23 Hymns, Prayers, and Songs. |
| 10 The Novices. | 24 Sermons to the Novices, and |
| 11 Spiritual Exercises. | to the Professed. |
| 12 The young Man's Doctrinal. | 25 Epistles. |
| 13 Of Silence and Solitude. | 26 Lives of Gerard the Great, |
| 14 Of human Frailty. | Florentius, and some of his |
| 15 The Manual of the Religious. | Community. |
| 16 The Manual of the little | 27 A Chronicle of the Monas- |
| ones. | try of Mount St. Agnes. |

There is a great difference in the editions of his Works; for some have put two or more of them together, under one general title, and others have divided 'em, either as they liked, or thought the most proper.

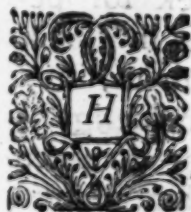
T H E

OF THE
IMITATION
OF
Jesus Christ.

The First Book.

CHAP. I.

*Imitate Jesus Christ, and despise all vanities of
this world.*



*H*E who follows me, walks not in darkness, says our Lord, *John viii. 12.* These are the words of *Jesus Christ*, by which he exhorts us to imitate his life and manners, if we would truly be enlightened, and entirely deliver'd from the blindness of the heart; therefore, our principal employment should be in meditating upon the life of *Jesus Christ*.

The doctrine of *Jesus Christ* exceeds beyond all comparison the instructions of all the holy men that have been; and the soul that has the Spirit of *Christ* will find in it a *hidden manna*. Yet many hear the *Gospel*, and are but lightly touch'd by it, because they have not the Spirit of *Jesus Christ*; for he who would fully and unfeelingly understand the

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words

words of *Christ*, must labour to make his whole life like his. For, of what use will it be to you, to speak learnedly of the Trinity, if you are displeasing to the Trinity, by the want of humility?

As a man is not made holy by sublime discourses, but is made dear to God by a pious life; I would rather feel a compunction in my heart, than know how to define it. He, who would approve himself wise in good earnest, must first by a just contempt of this world, raise himself up to the desires and endeavours after the kingdom of heaven. If you were able to repeat all the Bible by heart, and all that has been taught by the philosophers, of what use would it be to you without the love of God? *Vanity of vanities*, said the Wise-man, *and all is vanity*, Eccl. i. 2. but *to love God, and to serve him only*, Eccl. xii. 13.

As it is the highest wisdom to aspire to the kingdom of heaven, by despising all the things of this world, it is a folly and a vanity to seek for perishable riches, and to place one's hope in them. To doat upon things that fly swiftly from us, and cling fast about imaginary and transitory delight; while we suffer our selves by these to be detained and diverted from the pursuit of substantial and eternal joys. It is a vanity to seek after honours, and to labour to become great; and it is a vanity to indulge the desires of the flesh, and to court the measures that must be rigorously punish'd in those that enjoy them. It is a vanity to wish for long life, when it is not one's care to live well; and it is a vanity to think of things present with anxiety, and not to foresee those that are to come. It is a vanity to tie one's self to that which so soon passes, and not to pursue that which remains eternally. Be often mindful of those words of the Wise-man, *That*
the

the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing.

Labour then, to take the heart from the love of things visible, that it may not fix in any but what are invisible; for those that follow what their senses incline them to, stain their own souls, and lose the favour of God.

R E F L E X I O N.

He that follows our Lord, walks in the light that came from heaven with him, for the conducting of those that desire to be in the way to it. It is a light that shines in the hearts and actions of his disciples, that others seeing it, may become one with them, and be, as he is, unchangeable and eternal in the heavens. Without this light, all is but darkness; and riches, dignities and learning of no value; for what is not to accompany us beyond the grave, it is the highest vanity to perplex our selves about.

If you would go to heaven, give your self to *Jesus*; believe all what he has taught; do by all men as you have learn'd of him, and die to all the things of this world, as he did; that in dying to them in time, you may live with him in eternity.

CHAP. II.

Be humble in what you know, rather than anxious for more knowledge.

ALL Men naturally desire to know; but what is there in knowledge without the fear of God? An humble peasant that serves God, is bet-

ter than a proud philosopher that amuses himself upon the courses of the stars, and neglects the concern he should have for his own soul. He who knows himself well, despises himself, and takes no pleasure in the praises of men. If I were to know all that can be known in the world, and have no charity, of what use would that be to me before God, who will judge me according to my works?

Endeavour to moderate your desire for knowledge, for it disturbs the mind, and often proves to be nothing more than an illusion, and involves it in great mistakes and perplexities. Men of knowledge are willing to appear, and pass for wise and learned men; but there are many things which are but of little, or no use to the soul when they are known. It is a great folly to apply to any thing but what may be of use to our salvation; for words and notions yield no satisfaction to the soul; but an innocent life comforts the heart, and a pure conscience gives a great confidence towards God.

The more you know, and the better you understand what you do know, the greater will be your condemnation, if your life is not the more holy by it; therefore, let not any art or science lift you up in your own thoughts, but rather fear more, in proportion as your knowledge increases.

If you think you know many things, and understand 'em well, assure your self, there are many more you know nothing of; therefore, instead of affecting a higher degree of wisdom, be always ready to acknowledge your own ignorance. Why do you prefer your self to those who are less learned, since there are many who are more learned than you, and more knowing in the law of God?

If

If you would know any thing to advange, desire to be unknown, and of no esteem amongst men.

To know, and despise our selves, is the highest and most useful point of all knowledge. It is great wisdom, and a great perfection, to have a low and a mean opinion of our selves, and a high esteem for others.

If you see another in any irregularity, or even in an open crime, you ought not to think the better of your self; for you know not how long you may remain in that which is good. We are all frail, but you ought not to think any more frail than your self. Remember then, that infirmities are common to all mankind; and so remember it, as to persuade your self, or at least to suspect, that these are dealt to thee in as plentiful a measure, as to any other person whatsoever.

R E F L E X I O N.

WE all desire to know, and every one desires to know himself; yet, tho' all are in hard labour for the knowledge of other things, there are but few that endeavour to know themselves, and by that neglect fail in the fear of God, that would carry them to the grave in quiet; for tho' other fears disturb the mind, this is a fear in which it finds its own peace.

He that knows, fears; and he that knows himself, must be in fear of that which may befall him; therefore, with your other learning, learn to know your self, that you may know your duty towards God, and do it in that humility which the knowledge of your self will give you.

In the knowledge of your self, you will know
all

all that is necessary to your eternal happiness, and the knowledge of other things, without that, will be but a vexation, and a perplexity to the spirits.

As you are the image of God, in the knowledge of your self you will see the divine likeness; and seeing how that is defaced by your own defects, you will humble your self before him, that after death you may see him as he is in himself.

It is for your self that you would know other things; but if you remain ignorant of that for which you would know them, what will you be the better for what you will know of them? Endeavour then to know your self; for the more you know of your self, the less you will desire to be known by others; and the less you are known, the greater will be your peace, and the greater the favour you will be in with God. Your greater knowledge in other things may bring you to severer judgment; but by the knowledge of your self, you will judge your self; and that will save you very much in the judgment of God.

In knowing your self, you will despise no man for being less learned than you are, it being but in some things that you will find him so, there being no man but what is learned in many things you know nothing of; and in the comparison between his learning and yours, his may be of use to all men, and yours of no value to any body.

In knowing your self, you will pity, rather than reproach the frailties of a brother, and humble rather than exalt your self in seeing them; for you will see how slender your security is, from the mistake he is fallen into; and the sight of your own necessity for mercy, will raise your charity for him.

CHAP. III.

Hear God; for it will be your happiness to be taught by him.

HAPPY is the man whom truth condescends to teach, not by dark figures, and words that are soon forgotten, but by the truth as it is in itself; for our opinions, and our own senses often deceive us, it being but little that is seen by them.

How high a value do we set upon the knack of distinguishing and disputing nicely, in matters hid from common apprehensions; but matters too, which, to know nothing of, will not render a man's case one whit the worse at the day of judgment? Egregious and elaborate folly! which overlooks useful and necessary points, as things not worthy our regard; and bends our industry to find out those, which either turn to no account, or what is worse than none. Thus taking pains to be ignorant at last, and verifying in our own selves the Prophet's description of the Heathen idols, which *have eyes, and yet see not*, Psalm cxv.

Of what service is it to be capable of disputing with so much care and subtilty upon dark and hidden things, since our ignorance in them will not be reproved in the judgment of God? It is a great folly to neglect that which is profitable and necessary, and give the mind to things that are only curious, and are hurtful. We have eyes and see not. What have we to do with dry and subtil notions, which perplex the philosophers? He that hears the eternal word, does not embarrass himself in unnecessary disputes.

From the one Word are all things; all bear witness

nels to it; it is that which was in the beginning; it is that which now speaks to our hearts; and without it, no man can understand, or judge truly of any thing.

He, to whom all things are one; he, who reduces all things to one, and sees all things in one, will be of a quiet and a composed mind, and dwell in peace in the bosom of God. O God, the truth, make me one with thee in everlasting love! I often weary my self with reading and hearing; but in thee I find all that I seek, and all that I desire. Let all the Doctors hold their tongues; let all the creatures remain in silence before thee, and speak thou alone to me. Should all our Teachers be for ever dumb, and this great volume of the creatures continue shut to us, we might dispense with all the rest; if thou would'st vouchsafe thy own information, and teach us by thy self.

The more a man retires into himself, and becomes simple from the bottom of the heart, the more, and sublimer things will he understand without trouble, because he will receive the light of knowledge from on High. The soul that is pure, simple and constant, is without disturbance, tho' employed about and among many things; because it does all to honour God; and possessing a peace within it self, it seeks not it self in any thing it doth.

Who hinders and disturbs you so much as the unmortified affections of your own heart? He who is good and faithful to God, first orders all things inwardly that he is outwardly to do; nor does he order them by vicious affections, but by the rule of right reason.

Who has a greater enemy to contend against, than he who contends against himself, and would

come our selves, and to gain every day some fresh advantage, that we may advance daily in good works.

Every perfection in this life, being mixed with some imperfection, and all our light with some darkness, an humble knowledge of your self, is a surer way of going to God, than a research for profound learning. Yet, learning is not to be despised, nor the simple knowledge of things to be contemned, it being good in it self, and according to the order of God; but a virtuous life, and purity of the conscience are always to be preferr'd. But because many desire learning rather than virtue, they are often deceived, and bring but little or no fruit from their studies. The true reason then, why in an age where learning is had in universal admiration, so little profit is made, and both error and vice do notwithstanding so wretchedly abound, is in truth no other, than that men generally mistake their main business and proper excellence. They had rather cultivate their parts than their manners, and account it a greater accomplishment to know much, than to live well.

O! if men would use as much care in rooting out their vices, and the planting of virtues, as they do in the forming of questions and disputes, the world would not have so many mischiefs in it, nor would there be so much indifference in places dedicated to solemn worship. It will not be asked in the day of judgment, what we have read, but what we have done; nor if our discourses have been eloquent, but if our lives have been holy.

Where are the doctors and masters, who flourish'd in their learning, and you were acquainted with when they were living? Others have succeeded to their preferments, and perhaps scarce ever think

of them. They seem'd to be something during their lives; but now there is no more said of them. O! how soon does the glory of the world pass away! O that their lives had been answerable to their learning! then their readings and studies had been to good purpose. How many are there in the world that are lost in the vanity of their learning, and an entire neglect of the service of God? They labour more for the praises of men, than the humility that should make them pleasing to God, and lose themselves in the vanity of their own reasonings. He is truly great, who is great in charity; is little in his own eyes, and sets no value on the greatest glory of this world. He is truly wise, who despises all earthly things to gain *Jesus Christ*; and he is truly learned, who does the will of God, and renounces his own will to him.

R E F L E X I O N.

THAT the peace of God may be always with you, in all things endeavour to overcome your self; for till that enemy is subdued, there will be no rest for your soul.

Gratify no curiosity; think not of being great or learned before men, but of being holy in the sight of God, as the truth teaches, that you may be great in heaven, as they are who liv'd to please God when they were upon earth.

Men may seem great in their own eyes; but before God, the greatest man is a very little thing, very much constrain'd, and as nothing in the sight of him that sees all. Therefore, as in the eyes of men you can be no more than a man, you can have nothing to glory in, because you can be no more than one mean thing among other mean things, and

and differing from the meanest of them, only as one grain of dust may differ from another.

Outward things, will be of no use to you, while you have no peace within; and this is not to be had till you despise them; therefore, use not the body as if the soul was made for it, but as a thing that was made for her; and think of it no more than it must concern you to keep her tenement in repair.

Why do you fatigue the mind with reading, and waste the spirits by enquiries, which are of no use to your salvation? Lose not your self in your studies, that your soul may not be lost in the vanity of exalting your self amongst your brethren.

Seek for God in all things, and in finding him you will find your own peace; and in seeking for him only, you will find all that may be wanting to you; for in him you have all, and without him you have nothing.

Make the will of God the rule of your life, and you will find nothing will'd but what will be pleasing to you; for in his will you will have your own; and he that has his own will, will be at rest.

CHAP. IV.

Never shew your belief to what may be said to the disadvantage of another.

WE must not believe all that is said to us, nor all that comes into our own thoughts; but be cautious, weighing every thing carefully according to the will of God. But our weakness is such, that it inclines us to believe and speak

ill, rather than well of others. The good man does not easily give credit to all the reports that are made; for he knows men are weak, always inclining towards the bad, and subject to mistakes by the intemperance of the tongue.

It is an argument of great wisdom, not to be hasty and unadvised in our actions, nor to stand stiffly in our own opinions; and it is an effect of the same wisdom, not to believe all that is said, nor presently to make report of what we have heard, or do believe. Always advise with one who is wise and conscientious, and chuse to be instructed by one that is better than your self, rather than to follow hearsay, or your own imagination.

A good life gives great experience, and makes a man wise according to God. The more he humbles and resigns himself to God, the more wisdom there will be in all his conduct; and the greater will be the peace that he will have in his own soul.

REFLEXION.

IF you would be at peace within your self, let not your belief be ready to embrace the reports that are made to disturb the peace of another; for he that believes much, offends much; and peace cannot be the portion of an offender.

You will feel a comfort in thinking favourably of others, and an inward disturbance when you think not of them, as you desire they should think of you; for the soul that is not in charity, can have no quiet. As charity covers the mistake of a brother, and grieves for his infirmity, so that charity is lessen'd in its value, when ever you reveal that mistake to his prejudice. As the report of another man's failing is a proof of a greater in him that reports

ports it, the reporter does himself as great a disgrace, as he intends to the person he speaks of.

Think favourably of an open offender, that, by thinking otherwise, you may not be the greater of the two; for God judges not as men do, and may be offended more by your thoughts, than by the actions of your brother.

As we see not the hearts of one another, the actions of one man are not to be a rule to another man's thoughts of him in all cases; but God who sees the heart, judges by what he finds in it, and often approves what we condemn.

Let not the mistake of a brother lead you into a greater, and so make one error multiply into a great many. Never publish the fault of a brother, till you find your self without one; for then your conscience will be in greater quiet, and his credit in safety.

CHAP. V.

If you would read to advantage, read the Holy Scriptures.

LOOK not into the Holy Scriptures for cloquence, but for truth; and read each part with the spirit it was written in; for in them we should rather search after spiritual profit, than subtilty of speech. We ought to read books that are simply pious with as much pleasure and affection, as those that are more lofty and sublime.

Ask not who writes, whether he had much, or but little learning; but let the love of the pure truth incline you to the reading of that which is written.

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Consider what is said, and let it not be your concern who said it; for men are forgotten, but the truth of our Lord will remain to eternity; and God speaks to us in different ways, and without any respect to persons. Too great a curiosity in enquiring into what we ought to pass over unexamined, often prevents us from reaping any benefit in reading the Scriptures.

If you desire to be the better for reading, read with humility, with sincerity, and a simple intention, without the ambition of being thought a man of learning.

Willingly enquire, and hear in silence the sayings of holy men. Respect what may be said to you by the aged; for the proverbs and maxims they often make use of, are grounded on their own experience and knowledge.

R E F L E X I O N.

LOOK not into sacred Books for ornament, but for instruction; for they were not written to embellish the mind, but to inform it. If you would read to advantage, read not without the love of truth; for that will be a light to you in all that is written.

While you are reading the sacred writings, God is speaking to you for your own peace; hear him in that still voice, as if he was speaking to you face to face; for if he speaks not to you, as he spoke to *Moses* upon the mountain, still it is the same God that speaks, though it is in a different way.

Despise not the simplicity that God speaks in; for he speaks not to the ears, but to the hearts of his servants, that there may be more use than
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ornament in what is said. A pious subject is so much above words, that words which are contrived for the ears of men always debase it, and deprive it of the force by which it should work upon their hearts; for the simplicity that is in piety, is never well express'd in words that are unlike itself. Therefore, despise not what God shall say to you, for the simplicity that is used in what he says; for he would not speak like himself, if he was to speak in a different way.

In all your readings, endeavour to find the spirit of the author; make it your own, while you are reading him, that his light may not be lost upon you, nor your own time lost with it.

CHAP. VI.

*Your peace will be in the mortifying your
inordinate affections.*

IRregular desires give an inward uneasiness, that is felt as soon as they arise; for the proud and the covetous are never at rest; but the poor and humble of heart live together in peace. The man who is not yet perfectly dead to himself, is open to temptations, and soon overcome by small and trifling things; for while the mind is weak, and govern'd by the flesh, he must have a great deal of trouble in overcoming his earthly desires. Hence it is, that he is often afflicted when he goes to withdraw himself from them, and his anger soon rises upon the least contradiction. And, if he seeks what he desires, he is soon disturbed by a remorse of conscience; because he yields to his passion, which no way forwards the peace that he look'd for.

It

It is not by yielding to our passions, but by resisting them, that we are to find the true peace of the heart; for it is not to be found in the outward and the sensual man, but in the fervent and the spiritual, in a zealous and devout, a mortified and refined, and heavenly disposition of spirit.

R E F L E X I O N.

As the fruition of your own desires is often your punishment, so in retrenching them, you will ease your self; for outward things punish not, but in proportion to the disorder you have within. As this world is every way too little for avarice, ambition, or any of our passions in their full range, so there is no rest for the man that is punish'd with either; because the source of his affliction is always within himself.

By aiming at the greatest things we are subdued by the least, and our weakness comes from the strength of our desires; for he that is strong in desire, is always too weak to support himself.

He who is alive to his own passions, is dead to every good work, and can have no comfort in this world, while he expects to be comforted by it; for his dependance is in that which cannot but deceive him.

CHAP. VII.

*Expect all from God, and humble your self
to all men.*

IT is a vanity to fix our hope in men, or in any of the creatures. Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of *Jesus Christ*, or in appearing
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*A certain Ruler came and worshiped Christ,
and beseeches him to Recover his Daughter
who was then Dead, MAT. 9.18.*



poor in this world. Depend not upon your own ability, but place your whole trust and confidence in God; and in doing what is in your power, he will assist your endeavours. Confide not in your own wisdom, nor in the capacity of any man living; but expect all from the grace of God, who helps the humble, and humbles the presumptuous.

Glory not in your riches, nor in the power of your friends; but let all your glory be in God, who gives all; and, what is better than all, desires to give us himself.

Let no perfection or beauties of the body lift up thy mind; for the body is disfigured and changed with a little sickness. Value not your self upon your wit or learning, lest thereby you offend God, to whom all the good belongs that you have from nature.

Esteem not thyself better than others, lest thou shouldest become the worst of all men in the sight of God, who knows all that is in man. Esteem not your self for the sake of your good works, for the judgment of God is very different from that of men; and that often displeases him which is pleasing to them. If there is any good in you, to keep you always humble, believe still that there is more of it in others; for you can lose nothing in placing your self below all, but you may lose a great deal, by preferring your self to any one.

The humble heart enjoys a continual peace; but the hearts of the proud are always fill'd with envy and indignation. *The meek*, says the Scripture, *is refreshed in the multitude of peace*; but the proud in spirit *is like a troubled sea*, perpetually tost and driven by the fierce commotions of anger, and emulation, and envy, and disdain, which never suffer him to be easy and composed.

R E F L E X I O N.

FIX not your hope in man; for how will you be comforted by him who cannot comfort himself? Nor confide in your self, since you perceive there are things which are not in your power to procure; for what confidence can you have in one that is so weak as that proves you to be?

Trust not to any thing that may be promising in the creatures; for they are imperfect as you are, and cannot perfectly satisfy you in any thing.

Place your whole confidence in God; for every thing, besides himself, will disappoint you; and comfort is not to be had but in him that can fill all.

Use your own perfections to the glory of their Author; but glory not in them, through fear of their being recall'd by him that gave 'em.

Despise no man, for all are your equals before God; but if you would be great before him, place your self among the meanest of all his servants.

As peace always reigns in the humble heart, and envy is always perplexing, and disturbing the heart of the haughty, who, that would have peace, would not labour to be humble, since that is not to be had without humility?

C H A P. VIII.

Chuse a prudent man for your friend; and have but little familiarity with the world.

OPEN not your heart to every one; but let it be to the prudent, and such as live in the fear of God, that you reveal your own thoughts. With young people, and strangers, converse but little.

Flatter

Flatter not the rich, nor be ambitious of appearing before great men; but let your conversation be with the humble and the simple, with the devout and the virtuous, and converse with them in things by which you may be edified.

Have no familiarity with any woman, but respect all that are good; and in general recommend them to God. Desire no familiarity but with God and his angels, and take a pleasure in being unknown to men; for tho' we must love all, a familiarity with all is dangerous.

Sometimes, from the character given of a man by others, he is esteem'd before he is personally known; but ceases to be so afterwards. We are apt to think others are pleased with our company; but in knowing us better, and seeing our defects, the oftner they see us, the more distastful we are to them.

REFLEXIONS.

RETIRE from men as much as it is possible; for their conversations tend to nothing but the entangling one another in the cares of this life; and he that would not be perplex'd with the things of this world, must keep out of it by all the ways he can.

Converse not with young men but for their edification; for by them you cannot expect to be greatly edified; but chuse the aged rather, in whose experience there is a fund of useful knowledge, and from whose light you may receive light.

The less you are known, the greater is your safety; and the fullest security for your peace will be in retiring from a world that is unkind to all that are in it.

Retire into your self, and commune with your own heart, that God, who is the witness, may be the subject of your thoughts; which will rarely happen in other company.

CHAP. IX.

Be always ready to give up your own opinion, and be willing to live in obedience.

IT is a great advantage to live in obedience, and to be under the direction of a superior, that our lives may not be ruled by our own wills; and it is more safe to obey than to command.

Some obey by necessity rather than out of love; but they soon fall into trouble, repine, and complain of the least things; for the mind cannot be free and quiet, if from their hearts they don't obey for the love of God.

Go whither you will, you will not find rest but by submitting in humility to the conduct of a superior; for many, by imagining that the change of places would make them happy, have deceived themselves.

Every one naturally desires to act according to his own sense and liking, and inclines to men of his own sentiments; but if God dwells truly amongst us, we shall sometimes find it necessary to renounce our own sentiments for the sake of peace.

Who is so wise as to know all things perfectly? As that is not the gift of any man living, trust not to your own opinion, but desire to hear what others have to say. And in such cases a man gains a great point, when he knows himself in the right, and yet in tenderness and charity can comply with the infirmities

firmities or mistakes of others, rather than offend God, by being too tenacious of his own better judgment.

I have often heard, it is more safe to hear than speak, and to receive, than to give advice; so, tho' your sentiment should be good, if you give it not up to that of others, when the occasion shall require it, it will be the mark of a proud spirit.

REFLEXION.

OBEDIENCE is most truly said to be better than sacrifice; for when a man obeys by choice rather than by necessity, he makes an offering of himself that must be pleasing to God; and unexpected necessities are often turn'd into virtues by it.

Your peace being of more worth to you than your opinion, give up the one for the other, that you may get by the exchange; and make a virtue of it, as well as a conveniency, by giving it up for the peace of others, that may be disturbed by your resistance.

It is pleasing to God that we submit our opinions to the judgment of others, as well as our persons to their direction; for he expects the mind as well as the body should be in obedience, that the whole man may obey.

Be not stubborn in an opinion that may be offensive to others without use or advantage to your self; but give it up for the sake of peace, that the surrender may be of use to you and others.

In this, *the humility of your own heart God will not despise*, Psal. li. nor will your concern for the peace of others be unregarded by him who has a concern for the peace of all.

CHAP. X.

Let your conversation be in holy things, and flee from that which is unprofitable.

AVOID, as much you can, the conversation and tumult of the world; for to be continually employ'd in terrestrial concerns, is an impediment to devotion, even though a man behaves with the utmost simplicity in dealing amongst men. For in these there is a vanity that slides into us in a moment, stains our souls, and makes them servants to the things of this world. For this reason I have often wished I had not been amongst men; or that I had been silent when I was with them.

Why are we so desirous of familiarity and converse with one another, since it is scarce possible to free our selves from it, without leaving a wound on our consciences? The reason is, that by a mutual communication of our thoughts we expect some comfort and ease to the mind, that has been wearied with other things; and we very readily talk and think of those things that we most love, or the things we would chiefly avoid; but those entertainments are most commonly vain, and their outward consolations greatly obstruct the inward peace that God would give us. It is by watching and prayer, that we must preserve our selves from the vanities of this world; but if there be occasion for your speaking, speak only that which may edify; for a bad habit, and the want of circumspection will contribute to a neglect of your guard on the tongue. But discourses of spiritual things give a great increase to devotion, and particularly when they

they pass between persons of one heart, and one mind, associated together in the fear of God.

REFLEXION.

FLEE from all unprofitable entertainments, for they are in your time as the moth is in a garment, and always produce matter to be repented of.

The temperance of the tongue is always to be regarded; because its volubility often tends to the loss of its owner's virtue, and the injury of theirs, who are in the hearing of it.

The desire of speaking much is a proof of a vain disposition, and often brings men to the painful necessity of unsaying what they had before advanced.

Speak not but when it may answer some good purpose, that so the tongue may not run in vain; and be well apprized before you speak, that none shall be the worse for what you have to offer. How many have repented of the ill use they have made of the tongue? but it seldom happens that a man's silence has any bad consequence.

Let the employment of your tongue be in holy things, that by the words of your mouth the hearts of those that hear them may warm with a desire of uniting with their God.

If the tongue must be a traveller, let it be in the service of God, that others may be the worse; and that the good it may do, may be your warrant for the proper use you have made of it.

CHAP. XI.

Overcome your passions, that they may not overcome you.

WE might be in peace, if we would not concern ourselves with the sayings and actions of others, nor with things that no way concern us. But how can he be long in peace, who perplexes himself in the things he has nothing to do with, and will be fetching disturbance from abroad, when he should retire into himself, that he might examine and understand his own condition? Happy are the simple of heart, for they will be in peace.

The saints, in labouring to mortify their earthly desires, became so contemplative, and so perfect, that they could retire into themselves with freedom, and unite themselves to God in the fulness of the heart.

By indulging our own passions, and by too great a concern for transitory things, it is seldom that we perfectly overcome any one of our own vices; but remain cold and indifferent, and in want of that ardour by which we might be daily gaining ground of our irregular affections. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves, and disengaged from all inordinate desires, we should have a taste of God, and be able to relish that heavenly joy that comes from the contemplation of his truth. Our only impediment is, that we are not disentangled from our passions and corrupted desires, and that we labour not to get in that perfect way the saints have walk'd in before us.

Upon every small affliction we are dejected, and fall back to enquiries after human comfort; but if
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Christ appears to Mary Magdelen immediately after his Resurrection.

S^t Mark. Chap. XVI.



we had a resolution to support us, we should assuredly find that God would send us his succour from heaven. For he who appoints the occasions of our conflict, that we may overcome, is ready to assist those that contend, and entirely confide in his grace; but if we place the progress of a religious life only in the observation of outward things, our devotion will not be lasting. Let us therefore lay the ax to the root, that, being freed from our passions, the soul may be at rest; for if in every year we would draw but one vice from the heart, we should soon become perfect. But now, it frequently appears, that we are better and more free in the beginning of our conversion to God, than after many years that we have made profession of a holy life. An ardour and desire of proceeding in piety should increase in us daily; but now a man thinks he has done a great deal in retaining some part of his first fervour: If we would do ourselves some little violence in the beginning, we should afterwards be able to do all things with ease and joy.

'Tis hard, I own, to part with our old friends, and to unlearn habits to which we have been long accustomed. And harder yet it is, to enter into a formal war with our own inclinations, and obstinately to deny what we eagerly desire. But if we do not conquer smaller difficulties, what will become of us, when assaulted by greater? If we do not resist our natural propensions at first, before inclination is strengthened by custom, the enemy will gather strength. Every day's practice is a fresh reinforcement; and the longer the delay, the greater will be the difficulty. O think of this in time, and consider the happy effects of an early and serious piety: What peace, what triumphs to your selves; what joy to others, to God and Christ, to
E angels

angels and good men, you will certainly procure, by behaving your selves gallantly in this spiritual warfare. This sure will ballance all the hardships of virtue, reproach your cowardice and sloth, provoke and inflame your diligence and courage; and make you zealous, resolute, impatient to grow in grace, and advance every day in spiritual perfection.

R E F L E X I O N.

IT may be said of our passions, as it is of fire and water, that they are good servants but very bad masters; for, when they rule, they are our leaders into all manner of evils; and with them we are to be in perpetual conflict; for it is from them that the devil receives the power of hurting us.

To them the soul is in that captivity which is the cause of all our disorders; and when you think of what you have to do for the recovery of her freedom, the mind will seek no further for an employment. For, the recovery of her freedom will be a work of so much difficulty, that your whole time will be little enough for you to do it in; therefore, when you concern your self with that which does not concern you, the things that do must be neglected, and the soul depriv'd of the peace that she might enjoy.

In the morning, consider the state of your own passions, and give the work of the day to their reduction; for the evils that are in them, you will find sufficient for the day you are in.

Be so far from an enquiry into other mens actions, as to make it your whole care to govern your own; and let that be with a piety that may make them pleasing to God, and a prudence that may make them useful to mankind.

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Do that to day, and it will give you strength for the morrow, and make that easy to morrow which seems excessively hard to day ; and the custom continued will habituate the mind in a gradual way, till the daily increase of its strength shall remove all that is choaking up the way to heaven.

CHAP. XII.

It is to your advantage to suffer in this life.

IT is good for a man to be afflicted ; for by crosses and disappointments he considers himself as an exile, and loses his hope in the things of this world, perceiving he ought not to place it in them.

It is good for us that we sometimes meet with opposition, and that men think ill of us when we intend well, and act according to our intention ; for by this means we are humbled, and humility is an excellent preservative against vain-glory. For, when men think ill of us, we are the more inclin'd to appeal to God as the witness to all that passes within us ; the contempt and disregard with which we are treated by men, fixes us in him ; and for this reason a man should settle himself so fully in God, that he may not think of men for his comforters.

When a good man is afflicted, tempted, or troubled with evil thoughts, he sees the necessity he has for God, and finds, he can do nothing that is good without him. Then he utters sighs, and prays to be deliver'd from the miseries of this life, and lamenting the length of it, he wishes for death

that he may be dissolved, and united to *Jesus Christ*. Then he perceives he cannot be assured of any thing in this world, nor of a full and perfect peace while he is in it. In a word, such circumstances as these are more effectual than ten thousand arguments, to convince him by his own sensible experience, that perfect security and entire satisfaction are not so much as consistent with the condition of man in this present world; and therefore we must be content to wait another and future state, which alone deserves our affections, because it alone can make us truly and compleatly happy.

R E F L E X I O N.

Regret not your present sufferings, for they are short, and proportion'd to the strength God has given you; and they are the medicine that is prescribed by the physician of your soul, that you may live for ever.

You are crossed, contradicted, and ill treated by men, by an order in the providence of God, that you may be willing to leave them, when he shall require it from you, for the blessed union you are to have with him.

Things are not as you desire, because you may have no affection for them in the hour of your death; for nothing can equal your desires, till you come where all things may be full.

You are to have no perfect comfort in any thing this world affords, that your happiness may not be found in the wrong place; but that you may return to yourself, where you will learn that it is not to be found but in God. And, glorious is the order, by which the faithful servants of God may be ever applying to him, in every thought, in every word,
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and action of their lives; and wonderful it is, that from their works an eternity of glory should be deriv'd to them, tho' not merited by them.

CHAP. XIII.

Temptations are useful, tho' they are afflictive.

WE must not expect to be free from afflictions and temptations whilst our living is in this world; for, as holy *Job* says, *The life of a man is a warfare upon earth.* Therefore, a man should take care in managing himself under his temptations, and watch in prayer, that the devil may not have the opportunity of deceiving him; for he never sleeps, *but goes about, seeking whom he may devour,* 1 Pet. v. 8.

There is no man so holy, but what is sometimes exposed to temptations; nor can we be entirely without them; yet are temptations useful, tho' they are troublesome and grievous; for they humble, purify, and instruct the soul of man. All the saints have passed through a great many temptations and afflictions, and made great advantages of them; but such as fail'd in the resolution which that trial should have given 'em, fell away, and were rejected by God.

There is no order so holy, nor place so secret, in which a man meets not with temptations and troubles; and as long as he shall live, he will not be entirely freed from them; for being born with an inclination to evil, the root of it is always within us.

Temp-

Temptations and affliction succeed to each other; no sooner does one pass, but another comes; and as our first state of felicity is lost, we shall have something to suffer at all times.

Many endeavour to flie from temptations, and fall more grievously into them; for by flight alone we cannot overcome; but patience, and a perfect humility, make us too strong for all our enemies.

When the evil is not torn out by the root, it is no more than outwardly avoided; and then a man profits but little, and is the sooner follow'd with fresh temptations, and feels them worse than he did before. By patience, and an humble expectation of succour from God, by little and little, you will overcome temptations with less difficulty, than by violence, anxiety, or relying on your own strength.

Take frequent advice in temptations; but be not severe to him that is under them; but endeavour to comfort him, as you would be comforted in his case.

In the inconstancy of the soul, and the want of confidence in God, are the beginnings of your temptations to evil; for as a ship without a pilot is tossed to and fro upon the waves, so the man that falls back and breaks his resolution, is tossed by many temptations.

As fire proves iron, temptations prove the just man; for we seldom know what we can do, but temptations shew us what we are. We must watch with the greatest diligence in the beginning of a temptation; for the enemy is overcome with more ease, by preventing his entry into the soul, and repelling him as soon as he knocks at the gate, as was observed by one of the Ancients, *Take*

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physick, said he, in the beginning, for medicine comes too late, when the disease is grown inveterate.

A temptation has its degrees; at first it is no more than a single thought, to which a strong imagination follows; then it comes to be a pleasure, which is follow'd by an irregular motion; and after that it ends in consent. By these degrees the enemy gets into the heart, and so possesses himself of the whole, because he is not resisted in the beginning of the temptation; for the more the soul sleeps, and delays the resistance she should make to a temptation, the weaker she grows, and the strength of her enemy increases in proportion.

Some are under their strongest temptations in the beginning of their conversion to God; others at the latter end; and with some they are violent, almost through the whole time of their lives. But, according to the admirable order of the wisdom and justice of God, who weighs the merits and conditions of men, and regulates all for the safety and good of his elect, temptations are never so violent in some as they are in others. We should not despair when temptations beset us, but be so much the more fervent in our prayers to God for his assistance in the trial, and his comfort in our afflictions; and, as *St. Paul* expresses it, *That he would with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it,* 1 Cor. x. 13.

In all our temptations and afflictions, let us then humble ourselves under the Hand of God, for he will *exalt the humble, and save them that be of a meek and contrite spirit.*

By temptations and afflictions, a man's progress in piety is prov'd; and they make for him still a greater reward, if they are born well, and his
graces

graces shine in the greater lustre. There is no great matter in a man's being devout, and fervent when he has nothing to trouble him; but if we can suffer with patience and resignation, and continue steddy in the love and service of God, when he afflicts and sends bitterness into our souls, this argues a noble disposition, and promises an extraordinary perfection. Some persons have come off with safety and honour in very sharp and trying instances, and yet are worsted in common and trivial ones. And this case is capable of a very good improvement: For thus, no doubt, God gives men warning, that they should not presume upon their own strength, but humbly take sanctuary in him, in matters of difficulty; moved by the experience of that weakness, and frailty, which hath yielded to slighter and less violent temptations.

REFLEXION.

HOLINESS of life puts not an end to temptations, for it is by them that men are made holy; but it strengthens us against them; and they are offer'd that we may overcome, that our glory may be the greater.

By seeing our danger in temptations, we see the necessity for support under them, and by our own weakness in the exercise they give us, we see the necessity for help from another hand, which is no other than the Hand of God, which alone is able to support us; and as this humbles us to the Hand that can help us, if we had not temptations, we might be lost thro' the want of that humility which makes us acceptable to God.

In temptations, the beauty of providence shows it self; for that providence by which we have the fruits of the earth for these bodies which proceeded from her, tries the soul by the body, in the use that we make of them.

Temptations are painful, but they are not to be regretted for the pains that are in them, because of the profits they may produce; for the one will be eternal, when the other can be but for a time.

The most holy are not to sollicite them, through fear of failure in that strength by which they are to overcome; for no man should invite the enemy he is not sure of strength enough to give battle to. But when temptations come upon us, they are to be receiv'd as friends in the intention of God; because it is by them that we are to have the crown of victory: and as enemies in the intention of the tempter, because it is by them that he would destroy us.

Avoid them, if you can, for fear of an overthrow; but if that cannot be, receive them manfully, contend against 'em; confide in the strength of that arm by which you are to overcome; and lift up your soul in prayer, that it may not forsake you in the day of your distress.

While there are any unmortified affections in the soul, we shall have temptations that will be proportion'd to them; for our temptations receive their strength from the strength of those affections, the stronger affection always bringing on the stronger temptation; and the stronger the affection is, the weaker the soul will be in her struggle against the temptation it produces.

This occasion'd the voluntary penances, and pious exercises, which the holy men of earlier ages enter'd into; for they knew they must overcome themselves, to overcome their temptations. But,

tho' those affections were wonderfully reduc'd in them, they were oblig'd to a continual exercise, that they might not revive again, and render all their past endeavours fruitless. And, under their great austerities, and that perpetual watch they had upon themselves, they still found within 'em matter enough for temptations, to work upon. And, as the affections, that still remained in the soul, were still bringing her to her trial, as they could not fly from themselves, they found they could not fly from their temptations.

As it is not the change of place or condition, but a change in our affections that makes a change in our temptations, mortify the one if you would weaken the other; and if it does not remove 'em, it will make them too feeble to prevail.

Resist a temptation in its beginning, for it is in the delay that we are lost; trust not to your own strength, but fly to heaven for succour; and from thence you will be supported.

CHAP. XIV.

*Judge your own actions; but refer the actions
of others to the Judgment of God.*

TURN your eyes inward upon your self, and be cautious how you judge the deeds of other men. In judging of others, a man labours in vain, often mistakes, and soon falls into real faults; but he that makes it his business to examine and judge himself, his labour is always profitable.

The judgment we make of things, are most commonly according to the inclinations of our own heart;

heart; and the private love we have for ourselves, deprives us of the liberty of judging by the truth.

If all our intentions and desires were turned purely to God, we should not be so soon troubled by the oppositions we meet with in gratifying our desires; but still we are borne away with some secret affection, which inwardly constrains us, or some object by which we are outwardly inclin'd.

Many seek themselves in what they do, but in so secret a manner that they do not perceive it. They seem to be in peace while things go as they desire, but are filled with grief and disturbances upon the first contradiction.

It is the great diversity of opinions that makes differences between religious and devout persons, and between friends, country-men, and such as are of the same family.

We do not easily suffer ourselves to be led by others, farther than we our selves can see; nor do we part with old habits, but with great difficulty. If you depend upon your own reason, or endeavours, rather than upon that power which would bring you under the obedience of *Jesus Christ*, it will be long before you will be illuminated by the divine light; for God wills that we should be in perfect subjection to him, and raised above human reasonings by an ardent affection.

R E F L E X I O N.

As the desire to be thought well of, is the frequent cause of our speaking ill of others; a man's thinking too well of himself is the cause of his judging another. For, he who thinks of himself as he ought, sees his own necessity for mercy, and will never make himself the judge of another,

for fear of bringing him to a severer judgment. For, finding himself before a judge, who has more against him than he can have against a brother, he perceives he is signing to his own condemnation.

He that divides his own actions, that he may think separately of the different circumstances that will be in each of them, and judges of them as they deserve by the rule of truth, will find enough against himself to forbid the censure he would pass upon another.

Think of your self as you deserve, and not as you desire; let the charity you desire be shown to the frailties of a brother, who has his desires as well as you, and judge your own actions to soften the judgments God is to pass upon them.

He that judges his own conduct will reform it, by perfecting the good that may be in it, and correcting the bad; but in judging others, a man is multiplying his own deformities.

CHAP. XV.

*Let the love of God be shewn in all
your actions.*

NEVER do an ill thing upon any account, nor in love to any one whatsoever; but if you sometimes intermit a good work for the benefit of a brother, by changing it into a better, the good you were doing is not destroy'd, but changed to your advantage.

Our exterior works are of no use to us without charity; but all that is done by charity is very

very valuable, how little and contemptible soever it may appear to us; for as God considers not how much we do, but how much we love, in his account we do much when we love much. We do a great deal, when that which we do is well done; and a man does well when he seeks the good of the community, rather than the gratifying his own will.

We often think ourselves actuated by charity, when it is nothing but the flesh that moves us; for the inclination of our nature, the desire of having our own will, and the hope of gain, slide in, and soon mix with every action; but he that has a true and perfect charity, never seeks himself, but desires only that God may have the glory of all that he does.

He envies no man, because he has no pleasure in any good that is peculiar to himself; he would not rejoice in himself, but in God alone, for he desires above all things to be made happy in him.

He imputes no good to any creature, but attributes all to God, from whom all good things proceed, as from their fountain, and in whom all the saints have rest, as in their supreme felicity; and he that has but one spark of true charity, will undoubtedly perceive that all the things of this world are fill'd with vanity.

Charity looks upon God as the sole beginning and end of all good; the source from whence it flows, and the immense ocean in which it is swallowed up; the Person from whom all the saints derive their righteousness, and in the fruition of whom the reward of their righteousness consists. And therefore the man possess'd of this principle, sets no undue value upon himself, or others; he
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takes no part of the merit or honour to himself; he is not profuse in the commendation of others, but ascribes the whole glory of every virtuous action to him, whose originally and in truth it is. Little need be said, to shew, that one thus disposed, thus persuaded of God, as the only, the universal good, must have set his heart upon things above. For sure the least spark of his holy fire will serve to kindle in our breasts the love of heaven and spiritual joys; and suffice to convince us that all here below is full of vanity, and by no means an object worthy our affections.

R E F L E X I O N.

A perfect love for God forbids all manner of evil; and the good or the evil we do, will be in proportion to the love we have for him; for love gives the measure to all our actions; and, in every thing, we do as we love.

It being by love that the heart conceives, the tongue moves, and the rest of the body is acted, the action proves whether the affection the heart has taken into it is of God; for when we love God above all things, and love nothing but for him alone, a love for our brother will appear with it in all that we do.

Under this disposition, one man cannot envy the happiness of another; for one cannot desire part of the good another enjoys, but must desire all men should be sharers in the good he is possess'd of.

In this spirit, little things before men are great before God, because the worth of the thing will be in proportion to the love we have for him in the doing it; for proportion making the fountain

tain of wisdom, it makes a great deal of a little, and reduces a great deal to nothing in the sight of God. Therefore, let your love be great, and the things that you do will be as that is; for the things in themselves are neither little nor great, but will be always what your love makes them; but be not deceiv'd in the love you may think you have for God; for if from the heart, you don't covet the good of others as you do your own, the love you may think you have for God, will be nothing but a love for your self.

CHAP. XVI.

Bear with the defects of others, since you your self have many to be borne with.

THE things a man cannot correct in himself or others, he ought to bear with patience, till it shall please God to order it otherwise; for our remedy is in him only. It may be better that things should be as they are, that your patience may be tried; for without this virtue, our good works will be but of little value. Yet, under those impediments you are to pray to God to help you, and that you may bear them submissively. But at the same time that you ought to bear, you are no less oblig'd to pray against them; to beg that the ill example of them may be no hindrance to you in your christian course; and to implore the assistance of his grace, for the bearing them in such a manner, that the provocations arising thence may never shake your temper, or betray

tray you to any sinful, or so much as indecent, excess of passion.

If a man refuse to comply with good advice, or to reform upon admonitions and reproofs ; you are not, after these offers of doing him service have been made and repeated, obliged to contend with him any longer. 'Tis better to commit the whole affair to God, and endeavour to effect that by your prayers, which your discourses could not do. Beseech him therefore, whose infinite wisdom knows how to bring good out of evil, that his will may be done, and his name glorified ; and that all who serve and worship him, may be led into such actions, as most contribute to these ends, and are well pleasing in his sight. And when you have thus discharged your part, set your self resolutely to bear the greatest infirmities and faults of your brethren without any disturbance. And, for confirming this resolution, remember that you also have many failings of your own, by which the patience of other people will have its turn of being exercised. And if you do (as certainly you cannot but) see this, think how unreasonable it is, to expect you should make others in all particulars, what you would have them to be ; when you cannot so much as make your self what you are sensible you ought to be. And, indeed, nothing is more common than to express exceeding zeal in amending our neighbours, and mighty indignation against their vices or imperfections ; while at the same time we neglect the beginning at home, and either quite overlook, or seem highly contented with our own.

We still find something to say against the indulging of others ; but we would have nothing refused to us, that we desire of them. We desire
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severe laws for the humbling of others, but we our selves would be under no manner of restraint; and this shows how seldom we weigh our neighbours in the same balance with our selves.

If all men were perfect, what should we have to suffer for God from the hands of others? But God has so order'd things, that we may learn to bear the burthens of one another. For, no man is without defects, no man without his burthen; no man is self-sufficient; and no man is wise enough for himself; therefore, we should support, comfort, love, instruct, and give mutual advice to each other.

Adversities show how great, or how little a man's virtue is; for such occasions don't make us frail, but they show how frail we are.

R E F L E X I O N.

CONSIDER your own defects, that you may see what others have to bear within you; and, seeing that first, in the desire you will have for being borne with, you will bear with the infirmities of a brother.

You will see how unreasonable it is to think of humbling other men to your own wishes, which you cannot humble your self to; for it is certain, that you desire to be as different to what you find your self, as men can be from that which you would have them to be, and are in as great a disproportion to your own desires as other men are.

In the desire of reprov'g others, when you have no will to be reprov'd your self, you will see how seldom it is that you treat your neighbours as you desire to be treated by them; and this reflexion

may make you detest and correct your own behaviour.

If they that brought the adulterous woman to our Lord had thought of their own defects when they accused her, they would have besought his mercy for her, rather than his judgment against her. Or, if holy *David* had seen his own weakness, as he saw it, while it seem'd to be the weakness of another man, the prophet would not have needed to tell him that it was his own, nor would it have undergone the censure he pass'd upon it.

Love your self less, and God more, and these mistakes will remove of themselves; for the love you have for your neighbour, will be in proportion to the love you have for your self.

That love a man may have for himself, cannot be true when it is not founded in God; but if it is, these marks will be with it. He will have no love for his own body, but as it is the tenement of the soul; he will love his neighbour, as he loves himself; think of his frailties as he thinks of his own; bear with them as he desires to be born with, and live in that charity with all men which he expects from them.

CHAP. XVII.

A religious life is founded in humility, and the mortification of the inward man.

YOU must learn to break your own will, and overcome your self in many things, if you would live in peace and union with others.

It is no small thing to live in a religious community, or any society, without complaining, and to per-

persevere therein stedfastly to one's death. Blessed is he that lives irreproveably in it, and ends it happily.

If you would persevere, and improve in your devotion, live as a Pilgrim upon earth, and a stranger that is banish'd from his country. You must be content to be thought a fool in this world, for the love of *Jesus Christ*, if you would live the life of a truly religious man.

It is not the habit, and the tonsure, (by which Monasticks are distinguish'd from common men, and which of themselves profit but little) but a change of manners, and an entire mortification of the passions that make a man truly religious.

He who in religion seeks not God purely, and the safety of his own soul, will find nothing but sorrow and affliction in it; neither can he remain long in peace, who endeavours not to be the lowest of all, and to make himself submissive to all. For, you came to it to serve and obey, and not to rule and govern; to labour and to suffer, and not to waste your time in idleness and discourse. For, this sort of life is such a trial of men, as the fire is of gold: And none make good their post in it, but such as are content to humble themselves, and heartily and chearfully submit to any thing, for God's sake.

R E F L E X I O N.

Y O U cannot walk humbly with your God, before you restrain your self; nor live in peace with others, till you have humbled your self. For, no virtue is perfect without humility; nor can you have peace, but as it may be measured out to you by the perfection of your own soul; for, God forbids

bids it to those that labour not for perfection, and allows it not but in proportion to the care we take of our selves.

Humble your self then before God, that you may be in peace with him, in peace with your self, and in peace with others, that you may save your self, and win them into the way to heaven.

As outward signs of piety make not the pious man, you must be inwardly to God what you outwardly profess your self to be before men; for he who sees the heart, receives nothing but what he finds there.

Wat can break the peace of him, who always desires to be the lowest amongst men, and desires nothing but what the world will never refuse him? For the lowest place will be always free to him that would have it; and who can be happier than he who has all that he wishes?

He will have nothing to fear, nor any one to flatter; because he will have nothing to ask, but what all men are ready to give, without delays, crosses, or disappointments of any kind.

In the lowest place, he is not in the way to be envied, and is seated above the disturbances that come from the malice, the avarice, the ambition, or the ill-nature of men; for the humility that always resides in it, when it is chosen, is his security from the things that allow of no peace to the rest of mankind.

You must be compassionate and tender to others for their service, and severe to your self for your own; for without these, you can neither save your self, nor win them; and in this, there will be no difficulty but what it will be easy with God to support you under. For, God labours not as men do, he only wills, and all things are done, and
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suiting his will to our necessities, the things that seem to us impossible, he makes easy to those that labour to subdue themselves.

In all things, most truly humble your self before God, and use every opportunity that shall offer for the exercise and increase of your patience, under every thing that is to befall you by the divine appointment; and you will not want the assistance by which the hardest things will be made easy to you.

CHAP. XVIII.

*Let the examples of holy men be a rule
to your life.*

CONSIDER the lively examples of the holy Fathers, in whom religion and true perfection shined, and you will find what we do, to be little or nothing, our lives being as nothing when compared with theirs. For the Saints and servants of *Jesus Christ* serv'd him in hunger and in thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labours and weariness, in watching and fastings, in prayers and holy meditations, and in persecutions and many reproaches.

The Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins and others, who faithfully follow'd *Jesus Christ*, endured many long and faithful afflictions, and hated their own lives in this world, to possess them in eternity. How very austere, how entirely mortified was the conversation of the ancient hermits in the desarts? How long, how sharp the temptations they underwent? How fierce and frequent their conflicts with the enemy of souls? How constant and fervent their prayers? How rigorous their abstinence,

itineance, how unblemished their chastity? How eager their desires, how indefatigable their endeavours after higher degrees of perfection? How vigorous and gallant the war they waged against their vices and rebellious appetites? How pure and uncorrupt all their intentions, how free from any mixture of worldly prospects, and sincerely fixed upon God and his glory? The whole day they employed in hard labour, the whole night in devotion; from which their very labours did not hinder them; for even these were consecrated too, by the frequent intermingling of prayers and holy ejaculations.

All their time was usefully employ'd; all the hours of their devotion seem'd short; and such was the sweetness of their contemplations, that they often forgot, even the necessities of the body.

Their thoughts were so intent, their raptures so entertaining, so ravishingly sweet, that they became almost all Spirit, and quite forgot their bodies, and the care necessary for supporting them in life. Riches, and honours, and greatness, and friends, and relations were now no longer their concern. How should they? when even a part of their own persons ceased to be so; and providing those things, without which mortals cannot subsist, was now grown a trouble, and to persons so abstracted from flesh and sense, a painful and unreasonable interruption of better and much more important business.

Tho' they were poor in the things of this world, they were rich in grace and virtue; and if all outward things were wanting to them, they were inwardly full of the comforts and gifts of heaven. Tho' they liv'd as strangers upon earth, they were the dearest friends of God; and tho' they pass'd
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for nothing in their own thoughts, and were despicable to this world, they were precious and truly belov'd in the eyes of God. They liv'd in a sincere humility, a simple obedience, in patience and in charity, and improving every day in the spiritual life, and obtain'd great favour of God.

These are given as examples for the imitation of all religious men, and should move us more to the serving of God, than we should be restrain'd or hinder'd by the examples of the much greater number that are lukewarm, negligent, and remiss in their religious duties.

O how great was the fervour of those religious men, who retired from the world into cloisters and cells, which in the beginning of their institution were places of great piety and virtue! How great was their devotion in prayer! How fervent was their zeal and industry in the improvement of their virtue, and their exactitude in discipline! And their obedience to the rule, and will of their superiors, prevail'd in all things. These marks of their virtue show their sanctity and perfection, and that they were truly holy; who fighting valiantly, and like resolute soldiers of *Jesus Christ* trod the world under their feet.

It is now reckoned an extraordinary thing, if a man lives inoffensively, and has patience in the painful state he has taken upon him. O the coldness and negligence of our times, that we so soon decline from the first fervour, insomuch that life itself becomes burthensome through our sloth and indolence!

Would to God, the desire of proceeding in virtue did not wholly sleep in you, who have often seen the examples of many religious people, by whom

whom you might have made a great improvement in your course of piety.

REFLEXION.

SINCE example teaches more than precept; for your own instruction, regard the examples of the holy Fathers; and for the edification of others, let your example be as theirs was.

Let your practice teach others to serve God, as the pious behaviour of the Fathers may teach you; as the fathers now speak to you, do you speak to others in that austere way of living they have taught you to enter into. You can have no peace with God but by making war upon your self; nor can you be greatly edifying to others, but by doing as you advise them to do.

If you would instruct men in their love to God, begin to hate your self, as the Fathers did; for your words will have but little weight, if your works are not conformable to your doctrine.

Think not of ease here, if you would have it hereafter; because it is not for those who expect it in the next life to enjoy it in this; nor are the affections and troubles of this life to be regretted, if you would be deliver'd from those of the next.

You can endure nothing in this life but what will be short; will be no more felt, and very soon forgotten; and if it be well borne, it will deliver you from pains that are eternal, must be always felt, and can never be forgotten.

If you are not the better for the examples of the holy Fathers, you must be abundantly the worse; for they will be as witnesses to the contempt you put upon the use that may be made of 'em; and if you allow them not to benefit you in this life, they will

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S^T MATTHEW 5. Verse 24.
*No Gifts acceptable at the Altar, unless
thou art reconciled to thy Brother.*

will appear against you, to your confusion in the next.

CHAP. XIX.

*Every day renew in your self your desires
for good things.*

THE life of a religious man should abound withall virtues, that he may be such within, as he appears to men to be outwardly. And, indeed, he ought to be more holy within than he outwardly appears to be; for God is the inspector of the heart, he sees all that is within us, and where-ever we are, the highest reverence is to be paid to him, that we may walk in purity, like angels, in his sight.

We should daily renew our first resolutions, and raise a fresh fervour, as if this was the first day of our conversion; and should say, Help me, O Lord God, in my present purposes, and in thy holy service, that this day I may begin perfectly to serve thee; for, what I have done to this hour, is as nothing. And according to our purposes we shall succeed in our devotion, if we fail not in the care and diligence that must be used by every one that would have the benefit of them. For, if he who forms the best purposes, is sometimes weak in them, what must become of him who is irresolute, and forms none but what are unconstant, and quickly broken? This weakness may come by different ways; but a small omission in our spiritual exercises seldom passes without some loss.

Pious men depend upon God's grace, rather than their own wisdom for the performance of what they

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promise,

promise, and tho' they undertake, it is in him that they place all their trust, knowing, that tho' man proposes, it is God that disposes, and that *the way of a man depends not upon himself*, Jer. x. 29.

If we sometimes omit our usual exercises, either for some act of piety, or the benefit of a brother, they may be renew'd again without difficulty; but if it be by sloth, or negligence, that we forsake them, it will be an offence, by which we shall be greatly injur'd.

In doing our best, we may fail in many things; but it will be good that we fix in some certain method, and particularly contend against those things that are our greatest impediments; and with great care we must examine all that passes inwardly and outwardly; for the success of our endeavours depends upon the regularity of both. The condition of our affairs without, and that of our own souls within, must be diligently considered, and reduced into the best order we can; because both the circumstances of the one, and the dispositions of the other, contribute greatly to our furtherance in piety.

If you cannot recollect, and retire into your self at all the moments, do it sometimes, and, at the least, once in the day, which may be in the morning, or the evening.

In the morning, fix those purposes in which you ought to pass the day, and examine your self upon them at night, in respect to your thoughts, words, and actions in the day; for, in them, you may have done a great deal against God and your neighbour. Arm like a soldier of *Jesus Christ*, and resolutely contend against the temptations of the devil, curb the intemperance of your gluttonous appetite; and you will be the better enabled to overcome all the inclinations of the flesh.

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Never be totally idle ; but either read, write, pray, or meditate, or be doing something for the benefit of others ; but be prudent in the exercise of the body, for all things are not to be equally used by all men. Another necessary caution, which many good people stand in need of, is, That you should not be so zealously bent upon any private devotions or duties, as for their sakes to slight or disuse the publick ; for these require at least an equal degree of your esteem, and care in the attendance of them. But when you have discharged your duty in that point, and done all that your particular station, or the commands of your superiors, require from you ; then is the proper season, and then you will do well to return into your own breast, and employ the remainder of your time, as piety and religious purposes shall direct. And here again a prudent choice is needful ; for all sorts, even of religious entertainments, are not suited alike to our spiritual advantage. For we are differently moved by the difference in times, and our exercises should be fitted, some for religious festivals, and others for the days in ordinary ; some for the times of temptation, and others for the times of peace and quiet ; some for the times of affliction, and others when we rejoice in God.

In great festivals, our pious exercises should be renew'd, and the prayers of holy men implor'd with the greater fervour ; from one festival to another, we should make good our purposes, that we may be always in a readiness to leave the world, to celebrate an endless festival in heaven. Therefore, in those holy feasts, we should carefully prepare our selves, to live more circumspectly, labour, and be more exact in our devotions, as if we were soon to receive of God the reward of our labours

bours. And, if the time of our receiving that reward is delay'd, believe you are not sufficiently prepared for it, and are still unworthy of the great glory he will open to you in his own time, and endeavour to be better prepared for your departure.

Let us endeavour to do God still better service; but let us suspect, that we have not served him yet as we ought. For, if we had, he would not have put off our recompence to a farther day; and probable it is, that he does not translate us to heaven as yet, because we are not fit for it. And let us therefore double our care to qualify ourselves for that glory which in his own appointed time shall not fail to be manifested in us. Come he most assuredly will, and *Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, he will make him ruler over all his goods, and partaker of the joy of his Lord.*

REFLEXION.

MEN cannot see beyond the outward actions of one another; but as God is the spectator, and the judge of their heart, as you would fit your actions for the constructions of men, fit the heart for the eyes of him that is always looking into it, by thinking always of the purity that he expects there.

Tho' there is infinitely more due to God, than is due to all the world, or our own reputation in it; yet if we would prepare our hearts for God but with the same care and industry, as we prepare our words and actions for the world, he would receive it as a most acceptable offering.

Lord, what should hinder us, but that we might be to thee as we are to one another! Or what is

there in men, that they should be more afraid of one another, than they are of thee! Or what is there in this world, that our whole care should be given to it, without a thought of him that made it!

To be ambitious of being thought all perfection in the eye of the world, when you are nothing but corruption in the eyes of God, is acting outwardly for the praises of men, to the neglect of your inward man, by which you should have the praises of God. But, as the eye that beholds the heart is pure, the purity of that which it beholds should be your only care; for what will your appearance to the world be, if you are displeasing to the eye you are treating with for eternity?

As the difference is between the penetration, and the purity of God and man, as far as you are able, let the difference be, between what you inwardly are to the eye of God, and what you outwardly seem to be to the eyes of men; for what you are in the eyes of men will be of no use to you; but what you inwardly are before God, is that which your eternity depends upon.

The heart being capable of more good, than can be express'd by the outward action, take as much more into it than can be express'd, as it is able to contain; and God, who will always see it, will not fail in its reward.

As our resolutions, unless they are repeated, will fail, as other things do that are not repeated, let not a day pass without a repetition of the resolution you have made, that you may be the better able to support it, and your piety be under the better security for being habitual. But, as your purposes will be nothing, if you depend upon your own strength for the performance, your whole confidence

dence must be in God ; for you can form no resolution that will abide, if his grace does not come to its support, it being by him that all must be done ; for he that did all in the beginning, will be the doer of all, till that which he begun shall come to an end.

A fixed rule in life will be a great mean to the making it holy ; for to perfect the mind, it must be habituated to order ; and by a daily enquiry into your own thoughts and actions, what you have to repent of, will be always in your sight ; and the things you are to account for before God, will not be forgotten to your confusion in the account.

As idleness will give the enemy an advantage, he will be sure to make use of it, and will impose severe conflict for the regaining what you will be sure to lose by it : Never be without a proper employment ; for in the hour that may be wanting, your soul may be lost ; but the employment must be rightly chosen, through fear of its turning to your greater misfortune.

Religious festivals remember us of the pious and edifying lives of holy men, that, by imitating them, glory may be given to God for the helps to salvation that may be found in the examples of his servants. Therefore, let not one of them pass without help to you, in the way the servants of God have gone before you.

CHAP. XX.

Love retirement, prayer, and silence.

SEEK always for a convenient time to retire into your self; often meditate upon the goodness of God in all his works; and in your readings, avoid those that are curious, and chuse such as may rather touch the heart than fill the mind for its employment.

If you forbear useless conversations, unnecessary rambles, and hearkening after news and idle reports, and other frivolous wastings of time, you will have leisure for meditation upon things that are good in themselves.

The greatest Saints avoided the society of men, that they might serve God in secret; and it was with reason that one said, He always came worse from the company of men than he went into it; and the truth of this frequently appears in long conversations.

It is easier not to speak, than not to say more than we ought when we are speaking; it is easier to live in secret, than to be sufficiently upon our guard when we are abroad; and he that would proceed in the spiritual life, must with *Jesus* retire from the multitude. No man goes abroad with safety, but he who would gladly stay at home; no man is safe in speaking, but he who would rather be silent. No man rules in safety, but he that desires to be in subjection. Nor does any one command in safety, who is not willing to obey.

Tho' a man may seem secure in his joy, when his own conscience has nothing against him; yet the

the joy of the saints was always full of the fear of God; nor were they the less careful, and humble within themselves, for being so eminent for the grace and virtue that shone in them.

But, the security of the wicked, and that satisfaction they take in themselves, spring from their pride and their presumption, and deceive them in the end. Therefore, think not of a security in this life, tho' you seem to live devoutly in religion, or in sanctity in the desert; for those whom men have esteem'd the most holy, have fallen into the greatest of all danger by their presumption.

Hence it is, that many have been the better for being assaulted by temptations; nor, indeed, is it safe for us to be without 'em, least we should think our selves more safe than we are, and so run into a false confidence, and too freely think of worldly comforts.

O how good, and how pure a conscience there would be in the man that would never seek for transitory joys, nor entangle himself with the things of this world; or give his time to them! O how great would the peace and the quiet of that man be, who would place his whole confidence in God, think only upon things saving and divine, and preserve himself from every unprofitable care, and every anxiety for worldly things! Nay, could we but cut off all our fruitless and groundless fears and cares, and employ our thoughts upon such objects only, as are weighty and useful; such as promote the honour and service of God, our own salvation, and the good of others; how easy and quiet, how free from all reproach, would such a one's breast be to him!

No man is worthy of comfort from heaven, who has not been long sighing with a holy sorrow for
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his sins, and exercising himself in the works of repentance. If you would have your heart to be truly contrite, enter into your closet and shut out the tumults of the world, and, as it is written, *Commune with your own heart, in your chamber, and be still.* Pf. iv. 4.

You will find the blessing of God in your closet, which by going abroad thou often losest; the more you are in it, the sweeter it will be to you, and the less you are in it, the greater will be your dislike to it. If in the beginning of your conversion, you pass much of your time in a secret retirement, it will be to you afterwards as your dearest companion, and the place where you will find your most pleasant comforts. In the stillness and silence of a solitary life, the religious soul profiteth, and learneth the hidden truths of Scripture. There she finds rivers of tears, in which she may wash and purify herself every night, that she may be so much the more familiar with her Creator, by how much the greater distance she keeps from the noise and tumults of this world; and there a man finds, that God and his angels approach him, as he retires from his friends and acquaintance.

It is better for a man to live in secret, and to watch and observe himself, than to work miracles and neglect his own soul; for the glory of a religious man is in his solitude, where he desires neither to see men, nor to be seen by them.

Why do you desire to see that which is forbidden you to enjoy? For the world passes away, and all the desires thereof. Our sensual affections would carry us abroad; but when the moment is past, nothing remains but a burthen upon the conscience, and an unsettled temper of mind.

We often go abroad in cheerfulness, but return -

full of melancholly and disgust; and the joy of the evening makes a melancholly morning; thus all the pleasures of sense, which flatter in the beginning, sting and destroy in the end.

What can you see elsewhere, that you see not in the place where you are? There you see the heavens and the earth, and all the elements; and what is there more in all the rest, since there is nothing but what is composed of them? Go where you will, what can you see under the sun that is to continue long? You may think of an entire satisfaction; but you will never find it.

If you could see the whole world together at once, what would you see in it but a vain thing? Lift up your eyes then to heaven, to see God in the highest, and beg of him that he will pardon your sins, and the neglect of your duty towards him. Leave the things that are vain to vain men, and think not but of the things that are commanded by God; shut thy door upon thee, and call unto thee *Jesus* your well-beloved; stay with him in your closet, for you will no-where find a peace like that which you will find there.

If you had never gone out to hear of the things of this world, it would be easier for you to have preserved your own peace; but now from the pleasure you took in hearing novelties, it must cost you some uneasiness, some trouble, to cure your self this evil.

R E F L E X I O N.

CURIOUS studies may fill the mind with things that will remove the dwelling of God from the heart of the student; for he will not reside in the heart that is not given wholly to him, but will retire

tire as other things enter, till he has totally forsaken it.

The less you converse with men, the more you will converse with God; for your conversation with God will increase as it declines with men, and as they retire from your thoughts, God enters, to make them his habitation; and then it is, that you give your self to your self, that you may be wholly given to him.

The most holy men, in all times, always endeavour'd to avoid the company of men, that they might be in company with God in their solitudes, feeling still that God was more or less present to them, as they were more or less present with men; and finding it easier to say nothing, than not to exceed in what they had to say, they avoided men, to avoid the many useless words that are used in human conversations.

In withdrawing from the crowd, you enter into your self, and avoiding that employment the world would give to your thoughts, you enjoy the tranquillity by which the heart may be prepared for the residence of God.

As your retreat will impose a silence upon the tongue, and guard the heart from the evils that will contend for a dwelling in it, your safety will be found in your obscurity. Then it is, that you drive the disorders from the heart, which the world had planted in it, and enter into it your self, that you may rest there in the sentiments of a holy sorrow, and rejoice in that sorrow, because you are to be saved by it, and that it is pleasing to him by whom you are to be saved. Then you strengthen in the silence and composure of a quiet mind, and enter into the secrets of God that are contain'd in his written word.

He that would appear before God in all his glory, endeavours to hide himself from this world, and to be in silence; that if there be a necessity for speaking, he may speak with discretion, and would learn by his silence, that he may teach to advantage; and he desires to obey others, that he may know the better how to command himself.

When you have taken your LORD into your heart, confide in nothing but the grace of him that reigns there, who sitting as king, will protect it from the evils that would possess it, if you were to confide in any thing else.

If you were to feel that our Lord was within you, your fear of offending him should not be the less for that; for if the strength that may give you, is depended upon as your own he will retire, and that strength will depart with him; but if you still fear, it will prove that you love, and that will fix him in the heart, as its protector from the evils you are in fear of.

Let not your temptations dispirit you, for the exercise they will give, may drive you from the world, that you may retire into your self, as into a strong fort for your defence; but even then, think not of being without them, there being no enclosure but what they break through. But, this will be your happiness, that then your conversation will be with God, in which you will give your self to him, and that will make him all to you; for his succour is never refused to his own, nor to those that endeavour to be his. If he wills that his servants should be exercised, it is not his will they should be overthrown.

CHAP. XXI.

*Retire into your self, that you may have
a sorrow for your sins.*

IF you would make any progress in virtue and grace, keep your self in the fear of God. Keep your senses under discipline, to prevent the liberties they incline to; and preserve your self from the folly of a vain joy.

Endeavour to raise in the heart a true and a pious sorrow for your sins, and it will increase your devotion; for a true compunction brings many advantages, that are soon destroy'd by a dissolute way of living.

If a man considers the evils of life? and the many dangers his soul is expos'd to, how can he have one moment's perfect joy in himself? By the levity of the mind, and a negligent concern in the correcting our disorders, we are unmindful of the condition of the soul, and frequently laugh when we have just cause to be in tears.

There is no true liberty, nor solid joy, but that which may be felt in the fear of God, and the quiet of a good conscience; and he is happy, who avoids all the impediments to its peace, and brings his whole heart to the union of a holy compunction.

As he is happy who can abandon all that can stain or burthen his conscience, resolutely resist, for good habits will subdue the bad; and if you leave others to the management of their own affairs, they will not hinder you in yours. Meddle not with other mens business, nor involve your self in the affairs of great men; think first of your self, and

instruct your self before you think of instructing others, or even those that are the dearest to you.

If you have not the favour of men, be in no concern about it, but make your own irregularities your only sorrow; and grieve you have not been watchful over your own actions, as becomes a religious man, and a servant of God.

It is often better, and more safe for a man, that his consolations in this life are not many, and particularly in the things that are pleasing to the flesh.

If we never, or but seldom feel the divine comforts, the fault is our own; for it is, because we don't entirely forsake the vain comforts we expect from the things of this world, nor endeavour in the sincerity of the heart, to raise a pious sorrow for our sins.

Acknowledge your own unworthiness of the consolations of God, and the justice of your afflictions; and if you are bless'd with a perfect contrition, the world that you sollicitate will become an insupportable grievance to you.

A good man always finds sufficient cause for tears and a pious affliction; for, whether he considers his own condition, or that of his neighbour; he acknowledges there is no living here without affliction; and the farther he enters in the consideration of himself, the more he is afflicted.

The sins, and the vices, we are so sadly involved in, that we can but seldom raise the mind to the contemplation of heavenly things, are the just causes of sorrow and inward compunction.

Thus, by being engaged upon trifling and unprofitable thoughts, we are diverted from weighty and useful subjects; and if we would but turn the bent of our thoughts another way, we should soon find the happy effects of it. Let us but seriously reflect

that we certainly must die, as often as we think how long it is likely we may live, we shall be more zealous and diligent to amend our lives, and provide for that important change. And did we but set before our minds a lively representation of those dreadful torments which are reserved for the damned in hell, it were impossible, one would think, to shrink back as we do, from the austerities and mortifications of a religious life; or to imagine any labour and pain which we may suffer in the meanwhile, a hardship not most willingly to be chosen, for the preventing so dreadful a condemnation. But now, because these things are but seldom and very slightly thought upon, and we, willing to indulge our own ease, much rather submit to the soothing impressions of present deceitful pleasures, than to those harsh and cutting ones of future misery and anguish; we still go on in the same coldness and indifference, and indulge our sloth at the expence of our virtue.

I grant indeed, that some religious severities are irksome and painful to the flesh. But the fault does not always lie there; for the body sometimes complains and droops, not so much from its own suffering, as from the meanness and cowardice of the soul, which ought to encourage and support it. Beg therefore of God most earnestly, that he would kindle in your heart a true christian courage and fervent zeal. Dare to entertain your self upon the most ungrateful, when they are profitable and necessary subjects. Prefer the mournings of a pious penitent before all the vain jollity of a wicked and unthinking world; and pray that God would do to thee what the Psalmist says he does to his own people, even *feed thee with the bread of tears, and give thee plenteousness of tears to drink.*

R E-

REFLEXION.

IF a man did but seriously consider the important concerns he is charged with, and for what ends and purposes he was sent into this world, and continued such a number of years in it, surely he must think that it deserves now and then a few moments consideration, whether he has faithfully executed his commission; whether he has improved the talents he has been entrusted with; and whether he shall be able, when called upon, to render a just and faithful account to his sovereign Lord and Master, who will, one day, exact it of him.

Whoever thus retires into himself, will soon see numberless deficiencies, many notorious breaches of that trust which was reposed in him, and his own utter inability to make any tolerable satisfaction for the guilt he has thereby contracted. Sorrow and repentance is all the recompence he can make; and this he will sincerely render when he comes to a thorough sense of his offences; and surely he can have but a small taste for the comforts of this life, so long as he apprehends himself lying under the displeasure of a just and angry God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with the least approbation or delight.

CHAP. XXII.

The miserable condition of man considered.

MISERABLE thou art, O man, where-soever thou art; miserable thou must be which way soever thou turnest thy self; Beset on all

all sides with remediless miseries, without any possibility of escape by human means; and only to be avoided by taking sanctuary in God. Why then art thou troubled at crosses and disappointments, since these are the certain lot of all mankind? Not only you and I, but the greatest, the best men drink of the bitter cup: And no man ever lived in uninterrupted happiness: None ever succeeded in all his wishes and attempts; None ever was exempted from calamities, or absolutely free from vexation of spirit. Since therefore it is the will of God, that all must suffer and be miserable, are all equally so? No; there are different conditions and degrees of suffering; and his is certainly the best and most comfortable, who is called, and willing to suffer for the sake of God and a good conscience.

Men, who know not better, commonly envy and admire the rich, the great, the honourable; and imagine that princes and persons of plentiful fortune are compleatly happy. But this proceeds from great weakness and inexperience. If therefore we would rectify such mistaken apprehensions, let us get a right notion of spiritual and heavenly advantages. These will convince us, of what little value all earthly enjoyments should be in our esteem: How very little, how mere a nothing they are; how hard and hazardous to be attained; how uncertain the preservation of them; and how full of trouble and anxious care, even while we have them.

And who would be eagerly fond of that which can neither be got, nor lost, no, nor even kept, without fear and sorrow, and perpetual solicitude? Surely then the felicity of man does *not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth*, Luke xii. 15. 'Tis senseless, and absurd, to think it can. And if no proportion of worldly goods, tho' never so

large, can exempt us from misery; why then cannot a competent measure of them satisfy us? For, whether we have little or much, miserable we must be. The very living here upon earth, without any other calamity, would make us inevitably wretched. The more a man desires and labours to be like God, the less will his relish of life be; because he is so much more sensible, more thoroughly convinced of the frailty and corruption of human nature. For, what is this vicissitude, this daily round of eating and drinking, sleeping and walking, weariness and rest, and the many other necessities which the condition of mortality enslaves us to? Undoubtedly it is a disagreeable burthen, a heavy affliction to men whose minds are wholly fixed upon higher things, and whose only aim and ambition it is to get above sin and infirmity.

For the distresses and wants of the outward-man are a grievous hindrance and great oppression to the inward; and, perhaps, we shall do *David* no injustice, if we suppose even these included in that petition, where he begs of God to *deliver him out of his troubles*. But truly wretched are they who are insensible of their wretchedness; and yet still more so are those vain people, who are even in love with it; who dote upon this mortal life, which exposes them to it; and cannot think of parting with it at any rate, even when in such uncomfortable circumstances, that all their time and care is scarce enough to furnish them with provisions proper for the support of it. And yet, these insatuated creatures are satisfied in spending themselves in toil and trouble; and, might they but be suffered to continue here for ever, could dispense with any concern for God and goodness, and willingly forego the hopes and everlasting happiness of heavenly

heavenly kingdom. O foolish and slow of heart to understand and believe what is your true interest ; How deep are you immersed in flesh and sense ! how sottishly deluded with dross, and fond of vanities which profit not ! Have you no notion left of any thing but sensual appetite ? no regard for a future and ever enduring substance ? Raise your affections up to nobler enjoyments, and disengage them from those gross, those vain empty objects, which, if you still persist in the love and pursuit of, you will one day be taught by sad experience, how poor and despicable they really are, and how unworthy of all that eager concern you have unwarily bestow'd upon them. Be persuaded then by reason and religion, and do not provoke God to convince you by his vengeance and too late remorse, of how fatal consequence the love of this world is to all that are immoderately fond of it. Consider well those illustrious patterns of mortification and heavenly-mindedness which the primitive saints and favourites of Christ have set you. These great and good men had very little regard to the pleasures of sense, and the shining gayeties of this world, but kept their eyes fixed and their hearts intent upon eternal joys : those were their hope, their delight, the earnest and only longing of their souls ; and those the only objects of their desires ; lest if their affections were at all divided, the love of the things that are seen should draw down their hearts to vain and earthly objects, and hinder them from soaring up on high to the infinitely more precious things that are not seen.

This is a work of pains and time ; but let not that consideration drive you to despair of attaining an heavenly temper of mind. The undertaking, indeed, is great, and the time allowed for it

but short; but still this short space is enough, if you will but be careful to lay it out to the best advantage. Up then, and be doing; do not make good resolutions to day, and put off the execution of them to another time, but rather argue your self into action by such reflexions as these. This very instant is the proper time, this the season of amendment, and fighting the good fight. It is by afflictions and hardships, that men recommend themselves to the acceptance and favour of God. He hath ordained that fire and water, distress and tribulation should be the way that leads to refreshment and true bliss. Without doing some violence to thy self, sin cannot be brought under, nor evil customs broken. Uneasiness and pain are our constant companions while we live; and, while we carry this body of flesh about us, these will make an inseparable part of the burthen. 'Tis true we long for ease and untroubled satisfaction; but, as the condition of mankind stands at present, we long in vain. For, when we first lost our innocence, we lost our happiness too; and as both left us, so both must be restored together. Patience is now become a necessary virtue, and we must be content to wait the season of God's mercy; when he shall fully repair our breaches, heal our infirmities, put an end to our unrighteousness, pardon our sins, blot out the remembrance of them, and cause mortality to be swallowed up of life.

In the mean while, it must be a mortifying consideration, to think how exceeding prone this frail nature of ours is to sin. To day you confess your sins to God, and to morrow you act those very sins over again, which you lamented but the day before. Now you resolve to be watchful, and take good heed to all your ways; and immediately you

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run on as giddily and rashly as ever, forget your resolutions, and stand more self-condemned than if you had never resolved at all. So great reason is there for thinking very meanly of our selves, and disclaiming all vain confidences in any thing we are, or do. But these so sudden and frequent relapses are not our misfortunes, but our faults. They are indeed the consequents of our frailty; but that frailty would not so much affect us, did we not contribute to it by our own negligence and inconstancy. And a small neglect will soon undo what cost us much time and labour in doing; nay, what could not have been done even so neither, had not Almighty God seconded our endeavours with his divine assistance.

But if we cool so very quickly, and *cannot watch one hour*, what will become of us at last, and how shall we persevere in faithfulness unto the end? Wretched are we indeed, if we faint and grow weary, if we rest satisfied in any attainments, as if we were already safe and in absolute peace; when we have scarce begun the battle, and gained but little ground in holiness and reformation of manners. Alas! we are as yet but raw beginners; so far from compleat masters in our business, that we have still need to learn and practise the very first rules of living over again, before we can be so perfect as we wish and ought to be. Nor can we think much of our labour, if we consider that the more perfect we are, the more like we shall be to that pattern which Christ has set us.

R E F L E X I O N.

THAT man's life is the most happy, which is most free from guilt; this will appear very evident,

dent, if we do but seriously consider the nature of those things in which the men of this world place their chief felicity.

The covetous man esteems riches the chief good of this life; but did we know the hazards and difficulties, the indirect methods and unjustifiable ways by which they were heap'd together, the many heart-akes and restless hours which they occasion the owner to secure them safe in his own possession, and with what regret, with what agonies of his soul he parts with them at last, we should be so far from wishing ourselves in his stead, that we should prefer our own condition, how poor and mean soever it might be.

Ambition is another shining summit to which the worldling aspires. O, says he, were I but invested with power and authority, could I but command the reverence and respect of the people, could I roll through the streets in a gilded coach, with a glittering equipage, and my name the subject of general conversation, what a happiness would this be! Alas! thou know'st not the cares, the troubles and vexations that are the constant companions of the great. The crown is placed between the rose and the thistle, a fit emblem of majesty, which at the same time that it dazzles the eyes of the beholder, feels in itself a sufficient ballance for the glory and splendor with which it is surrounded.

But, says the voluptuous man, surely if I enjoy my full range of sensuality, no body can deny but I am happy, at least in this life. Far from it; thy enjoyments are no better than those of brute beasts, irrational, insipid, and beneath the dignity of human nature. And even while thou art taking thy fill of the pleasures of sense, canst thou say that thy conscience never flies in thy face? Hast thou
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no inward, no secret pangs in thy soul for the transactions of thy body? Art thou not sometimes fearful of what may be the consequence of thy present licentious course of life? Does not thy mind mis-give thee, that this is not the road to heaven; if not, that it must necessarily lead to a worse place? And does not the thought of this, at thy leisure-moments, fill thy soul with horror?

This is a short view of the happiness which this world affords. But now turn thy eyes towards heaven, and there see what great things God has prepared for those that love him. There thou wilt see, by an eye of faith, God a reconciled Father, Christ thy merciful Redeemer, the Holy Spirit thy everlasting Comforter, angels and saints impatiently waiting to greet thee on thy arrival on that happy coast, and an immortal crown of glory ready to wreath thy head, as the glorious reward for all thy past hardships, afflictions and sufferings.

Where then is the comparison between the pleasures of sense, and the satisfaction that this world can afford, and the infinite, immortal and eternal rewards and enjoyments which the children of God shall most assuredly possess in the heavenly state?

CHAP. XXIII.

Meditations concerning death.

LIFE is of short and uncertain continuance, and therefore it highly concerns you to be upon the watch, and be very careful how you employ it. To day the man is vigorous, and gay, and flourishing,

flourishing, and to morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little time carries him out of our sight, and a very little more out of our remembrance. O the hardness of men's hearts! O the wretched stupidity! that fixes their whole thoughts and care upon the present, and will not be persuaded to look forward, or have any regard to that which must certainly come hereafter. Whereas really every work, word, and thought, should be so ordered, as if it were to be our last, and we this instant to die, and render an account of it. Would we entertain our selves more with the thoughts of death, we should be much less afraid of it: For, in proportion as our lives amend, our fears will abate, and a good conscience will enable us to meet death with undaunted courage. However flesh and frailty may impose upon us, yet, be assured, 'tis greater wisdom to be afraid of sinning, than to be afraid of dying; innocence is a much greater blessing, than length of days. And whence is all this fear and anxiety? It is because we are not prepared for death. But if you are not prepared to day, how do you propose to be so to morrow? Alas! to morrow is uncertain; neither you, nor I, nor any man can depend upon it. Or if we would, yet to what purpose do we desire to live, tho' it were much longer, when by longer living our lives are so little amended. Assure your self, long life is far from being always a blessing. Too many (God knows) are so far from increasing in holiness, as they grow older, that the number of their days only adds to the number of their sins, and renders their account more heavy hereafter.

Happy is that man who can make this comfortable reflexion, that he has employed any one day of his life so perfectly well, as he might, and ought to have



J. Smith Scul.

*Our Saviour sendeth two of his Disciples
to prepare the Pasover, declaring his time
was at hand. Math Chap. 26. v. 17.*



have done. Many with great satisfaction reckon up the years since their conversion, and think it is a great thing that they have so long abandoned the world and a vicious course. And yet, would they but compare the time they boast of with the improvements they have made, how shamefully little is the good they have done? If dying now be so terrible, yet consider that living longer may be dangerous; and many, many a man finds too great occasion to wish, that it had pleased God to take him away much sooner. Happy therefore is he who keeps the hour of death constantly in view; and from this prospect of what sooner or later must come, is careful to reconcile himself to it, and to put his soul into a proper disposition for it, when it does come.

If you have at any time attended upon a death-bed, and seen another in his parting agonies; consider that this friend is gone the same way where you must shortly follow him. In the morning, imagine you may die before night; and when night comes, do not too confidently promise yourself another morning. Thus shall you be in a constant expectation, and in a good disposition to die. And be careful so to live always, that death may never overtake you unawares, or unprovided, nor its most sudden approach be sudden and surprizing, in respect of you. Many are taken away in an instant, and die when they were not in the least aware of it, for *in such an hour as we think not, the Son of Man cometh*, Matth. xxiv. 44. Let not the preparation I am admonishing you of be neglected, as a melancholy unpleasant thing; such as embitters life, and damps your present enjoyment; for of this be assured, that whatever satisfaction you may take now when that last hour draws on, you
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will have quite different sentiments of the matter. And the reflexions upon your past carelessness and negligence will be more bitter and afflicting then, than any the most sollicitous forecast for dying well, can possibly be in the mean time.

O how wise, how happy is that man, who makes it his daily care and constant practice to be such while he lives, as he will desire to be found when he comes to die! We may cherish a good hope and great assurance of leaving the world to our comfort and infinite advantage, if, while we continue in it, we can be induced by any arguments to neglect and despise it; if we be zealous to improve in virtue; if we can readily submit our selves to discipline and mortification; if we can comply with the painful exercise of repentance; if we be of an humble and obedient disposition; content to deny our selves, and ready to undergo any hardship for Christ's sake. But if these qualifications be necessary, as no doubt they are, they are necessary to be attained in health. For then a man is in a condition to strive, and to exert himself; but when sickness overtakes him, it is very uncertain what he will be able to do, or whether any thing at all. Whatever the generality of the world may imagine, who put off and delay their great work till such improper seasons; yet certain it is, that few, but very few, are reformed by a sick-bed. And they who defer their repentance and amendment till then, seldom, alas! repent as they ought, or are amended in good earnest.

Make no dependance upon the assistance of your relations, friends and acquaintance; nor cherish a thought so vain, as that their prayers hereafter can effect, what you never endeavoured to perform here. These can do you no service: but if they could,

could, yet, when once gone, you will be forgotten much sooner than you are aware of or willing to believe. And why should you rest upon their care, when you cannot be persuaded to take any care of your self? Can it be imagined that they should be more concerned for your salvation than you, whose proper interest it is? Supposing then, that these could do you any good, yet even thus, much better will it be that you should do your own business; better, in regard of the person; and better in regard of the time: For *now* is the season of acceptance, *now* is the day of salvation. And therefore this moment is the fittest for your purpose; the sooner you change, the better: Live then while you may; and begin from the present minute to live so, that you may live for ever. For if you neglect the happy opportunity now put into your hands, you will wish for it afterwards, when it is too late; and you may perhaps be reduced to such a condition, that one day, one hour, for making your peace with God may not be obtained; no, not when you would gladly give, were it at your disposal, the whole world to purchase it.

Consider then, my friend and fellow-christian, consider what a risque, what a hazard you run by your delays: Think, what misery and danger, what confusion and despair it is now in your power to prevent, by living in such a manner as becomes one who knows he must die. And therefore so spend every hour, that when your last draws on, you may embrace it with joy and hope, instead of fear and astonishment. Learn *now* to die daily, to die to sin and the world, that you may then begin to live with Christ. Learn *now* to despise all here below, that you may then be disintangled from the world, and at perfect liberty to leave all

and follow Christ. *Now* bring your body under by mortification and self-denial, and you shall then have great boldness in the day of tribulation.

Does any persuasion of a longer life encourage you to delay putting this good advice in execution speedily? Nay, but consider, fond man, how little you can promise your self one poor single day. How many instances have you before your eyes, or fresh in your memory, of persons miserably deluded and disappointed in this hope, and hurried out of the world without any warning at all? How frequently have you been surprized with the news of this friend being run thro', another drowned in crossing the water, a third breaking his neck by a fall, another fallen down dead at table, or choaked with his meat, a fifth seized with an apoplex at play, a sixth burnt in his bed, a seventh murdered, an eight killed by thieves, a ninth struck with lightning, or blasting, or pestilence, a tenth swallowed up in an earthquake. Such vast variety of deaths surround us, and so fleeting a shadow is the life of a man.

And should any of these happen to be your case, as you are not certain but it may, Who shall help; who can save you, when the precious opportunity is past and lost? Up then and be doing betimes; for, tho' you cannot so much as guess at the hour and manner of your own death, yet it is in your own power to be safe, if you will, and timely provided against it. Lay hold then of the present time, while you have it; make haste to be rich toward God, and let religion and your own salvation be your chief, your only concern. *Make your self friends, while you may, who when you fall may receive you into everlasting habitations,* Luke xvi. 9.

Behave your self as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and entangle not your thoughts in matters with which you ought not to concern yourself. For sojourners are not proprietors, and therefore, such should keep their minds disengaged and free, and not settle their affections upon things which they well know they cannot keep long: Raise your soul to God, and let it not dwell here, where you *have no continuing city*, Hebr. xiii. 14. But look up to that city, whose builder and maker is God, and send your prayers, and tears, and earnest desires before you thither; that when God calls, you may be in a readiness to follow in person, and make a happy exchange of this miserable world for a better.

REFLEXION.

THERE needs no argument to prove, that death is the common lot of all mankind. The world has existed near six thousand years; how many millions have been born in that time? Of all which innumerable multitude is there one now living that can carry up his age to one hundred and fifty years? What is become of them all? Death and the grave have swallowed them up; and how few, how very few, scarce one in a million, have left their names upon record, to tell us that such men ever lived? Are not we travelling on in the same road of mortality as they travell'd? And, can we expect that the end of our journey will not be the same? Undoubtedly it will; and the grave will be the common inn where we must all lodge, when the night of death overtakes us.

Since then this is undeniably the case; since

every soul that now inhabits a body, must one day most assuredly be separated from it, and take its portion in an immortal state, and be for ever happy or miserable, according to its behaviour while in the body, does it not behove every man, every individual soul, to make the best preparation in his power, to be ready for that awful moment, when either his well-grounded hope of eternal happiness will enable him to look death in the face with a pleasing satisfaction, or the terrors of a wounded conscience, and the fearful apprehensions of an everlasting state of misery, affright his soul with horrors, that will double all the pains, and multiply the agonies of his last hour to an inexpressible degree. Then shall a man reap the comfort of a life spent to a good purpose, however hardly it has far'd with him; or bewail his folly for neglecting the only opportunity he ever had, or will have, of making his peace with God, and of providing for the future welfare of his precious and immortal soul.

He then is the happy man, and only he, who enjoys the good things of this world so as not to set his heart upon them; who can part from them with pleasure, when they stand in competition with the honour of God, the salvation of his soul, and the eternal rewards which he is well assured are reserved for him. He is peculiarly happy in that he is not afraid of death, which he is so far from looking upon as an enemy, that he esteems it his best friend, since it alone can lead him out of this vale of sin and misery, and give him an entrance into those joys that are unspeakable and full of glory.

CHAP. XXIV.

*Of the last judgment, and the eternal punishment
of ungodly men.*

WHatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss, says the wise son of Syrach, Eccl. vii. 36. And this would certainly prove a most useful instruction, if we by the end understand that last and great account, which will one day be required of all our actions. For how powerful, how happy a restraint would it be upon us, did we but seriously reflect, and frequently ask ourselves, how we shall be able to stand before that strict and righteous judge, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid? One, who cannot, like other judges, be diverted from the steady course of justice; who cannot be blinded by bribes and presents, or mollified by subtle extenuations, or imposed upon by feigned excuses, and studied evasions; but who weighs all persons and causes by the eternal standard of equity and truth. Ah, wretched guilty creature! Ah, stupid unthinking sinner! that tremblest at the frown of a man like thy self, and canst not fear that bar, where all thy actions shall be weighed in the exactest scale of justice! How wilt thou appear at this tribunal, or what plea canst thou urge in bar of sentence, to him who needs no evidence, but is himself privy to thy most concealed impieties? Dost thou know this, and yet be careless and unconcerned how thou shalt escape the terrors of that dreadful day? Nothing can
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excuse thy appearance at that dreadful tribunal. For this judgment is universal; all mankind must stand upon their deliverance; every one must bear his own burden; and every one's burden is more than enough for himself; so that no man will be in a condition to assist his nearest and dearest relation, or his most intimate friend. To expect any advantage, any atonement then, which thou hadst not before secured, is most senseless. Thou only canst prevent thy own destruction; and this life is the only time to prevent it. Thy pious labours now will turn to good account; thy secret mournings move compassion, thy prayers and groans enter the ears of God, and melt him into mercy. The humble patient man will then be considered for his constant suffering and invincible charity. If he is now afflicted for the wrongs and injuries that are done him, it is more for the wickedness and guilt of the person who does them, than for any inconvenience and trouble brought upon himself; and this disposition will mitigate his own offence; he heartily forgives, and prays that God would forgive his enemies; and this in some measure gives him a title to the forgiveness of his own trespasses. He is more easily provoked to pity than to anger; and shall be dealt with accordingly, by a God long-suffering, slow to wrath, and very merciful, though men deserve the rigours of his justice. He often treats his body with severity and violence, and labours to bring the flesh in subjection to the spirit; and therefore ample amends shall be made him for these voluntary sufferings, and the pleasures of sense which he neglected, will be liberally recompenced by the abundance of heavenly and intellectual joys. But then, 'tis plain, these good
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qualities which minister an entrance into that bliss, must be attained as soon as possibly we can. This present state of mortality is the only stage of action and improvement; and since this scene so suddenly may change, we are not safe in the delay of one moment. This is really our case; but how loth are we to understand it? And so inordinately fond are we of sensual delights, that we even take a pleasure in imposing upon ourselves; and by the most fatal of all infatuations, cherish and gratify our bodies, at the expence and extreme hazard of our souls.

And what is the consequence of all this, but heaping up more fuel for everlasting flames to feed upon? For our sins and lusts kindle and blow up those fires; and the more heinous and impetuous the former are, the fiercer and more furiously will the latter be sure to burn. For, as the torments of ungodly wretches shall there be exquisite for their degree, so shall they for their kind and quality be adapted and proportioned to the sins of each particular person; and so contrived, as to be most sensibly afflicting and painful to the respective tempers and complexions of men, the habits they have contracted, and the appetites they have indulged. The lazy and stupid shall be awaken'd and roused into sense, by sharp scourges, and burning stings. The glutton and drunkard gnawed with insatiable hunger, and parched with unquenchable thirst. The nice and delicate, who proposed no happiness here to themselves, but luxury and pleasure, shall then be suffocated with the noisome vapours of flaming pitch, and stinking sulphur. The envious and discontented shall howl perpetually through the insensibleness of their pain. The proud and vain-glorious

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shall be confounded and overwhelmed with shame and contempt. The covetous shall pine away and be tormented with extreme penury and want; and no one vice shall escape a torture, exactly fitted to make its owner the most miserable that it is possible for him to be. In a word, One single hour in those dismal pains and horrors shall be more bitter and insupportable than whole ages of that uneasiness and trouble which wicked men here have so irreconcilable an aversion to submit to, for mortifying their vanities, and amending their lives.

For, (which is of all others the last and most dreadful aggravation,) those miseries and tortures have no end, no relief, no intermission. But the sharpest afflictions we suffer in this world will quickly have a period: They have their interval of ease and comfort; and those sorrows and troubles with which we are afflicted for the sake of religion, are largely recompensed with spiritual consolations, and sweet peace of mind. Why then should you grudge a little present grief? Rather mourn earnestly for thy sins, and bend all thy thoughts and care to the subduing and reforming them; that by this short anxiety thou may'st be deliver'd from eternal despair and anguish unutterable; and that by those few tears of repentance, thou mayest secure for thy self a portion of everlasting joy with the blessed.

O happy change of all the griefs and sufferings which the righteous shall experience in that day when they shall stand full of hope and humble confidence before that judgment-seat, from which their haughty and merciless oppressors, confounded with fear, and amazed with guilt, shall strive and wish in vain to hide their trembling heads. When he, who now stands tamely at the bar of men, and

innocently suffers, shall then be advanced to a throne, and placed among the saints and martyrs, to assist at the tryal of his once insulting judges. When the poor and meek shall have great boldness, while the proud and haughty sinner quakes at the presence of God and the Lamb. When that piety and godly fear, that abstinence and severe virtue, that patient suffering for Christ's sake, which is now thought just matter of derision and contempt, and counted extreme folly and religious madness shall then be acknowledged by its most malicious enemies and deriding scorers, to be indeed the true, the only wisdom. When the remembrance of past miseries shall be sweet, and they, whose insulting malice exercised the patience of the meek and humble, shall be struck dumb with sad remorse and bitterness of soul ; when all, who devoted themselves to God and his service, shall be transported with raptures of joy ; and all those who disregarded or despised them, shall weep and lament ; when the afflicted and persecuted shall bless his bitter cup, and feel more refined, more exquisite, more substantial delights from it, than the voluptuous and rich worldling ever felt in sensual pleasures, or uninterrupted prosperity ; when the plain dress of the humble, and sackcloth of the penitent shall shine glorious as the sun ; and all the gay pomp and glistering jewels of the vain and gaudy sinner shall be trampled under foot like dung. When the cottage shall be prefer'd to the court, patience appear more desirable than the most boundless and arbitrary power ; the honest obedience of an humble faith, more wise, than the nicest cavils of the subtlest wit ; and a good conscience of greater service than learning, and the most elaborate systems of philosophy ; when the

contempt of riches shall approve it self the greatest treasure; devout prayer the most delightful entertainment; silence and caution the best conversation; when good works shall plead more powerfully than the most moving eloquence; alms prove the most prevailing advocate, self-denial the most exalted pleasure; and the conquest of ill habits the most glorious triumph.

If then this be, (as most undoubtedly it is) a true representation of that great and decisive day; if this the different fate and effect of these so very different persons and practices; consider, I pray thee, the dreadful circumstances of the unhappy damned; and be induced from this reflexion, to endure a *little* now, when that *little* will secure thee against enduring infinitely more hereafter. Weigh the matter seriously, and think if the slight difficulties of a religious life seem tedious and tiresome; turn the argument, and reflect, how one who sinks under these, will be able to dwell with the most exquisite and everlasting torments. Nor is this a trivial or needless enquiry, but absolutely necessary, and of the last moment. For matters are so ordered, that perfect ease can be no man's portion in *both* worlds. They who chuse their good things here, cannot have them hereafter too; nor shall any man who indulges his sensual inclinations, here rejoice and reign with Christ in the kingdom of heaven.

Imagine then, that, from your entrance into the body to this very day, you had enjoyed the utmost your heart could possibly wish, of all which this world calls happiness; honours, riches, pleasures, without check, limitation, or interruption: yet of what service and good would all this be to you, if it should please God just now to strike you with death?

death? Is it not evident, without any farther argument, that all below is vanity and mere nothing; and that the love of God and a religious life is the only thing which can stand you in any stead? This will stand by you when all the rest forsake you; this is neither destroyed by death, nor afraid of punishment, but triumphs over both; fills the mind with confidence, and gives joyful expectation at the dreadful day of judgment; and sets us above all the terrors and dismal apprehensions of hell, and its everlasting tortures. But then, this is the peculiar privilege of the servants of God; for how is it possible for those who practise and delight in wickedness, to think of death and judgment, without fear and perplexity of heart? How is it possible they should enjoy any quiet, or be easy in their minds, if they ever think upon what is hastening on them faster than they are aware? Let the love of God prevail over the love of sin. But if thou art not yet perfect enough to be acted by this noble principle; let at least the love of *thy self* reclaim thee, and the fear of hell restrain and deter thee from a course, which must end at last in thy utter and inevitable ruin. *This*, says the Scripture, *is the beginning of wisdom*, Ps. cxi. 10. For he who is not influenced by the fear of God, cannot persevere in any thing that is good; as having no manner of principle that can save him, no curb upon his mind that can awe, or hold him in, from running headlong into the snares of the devil.

R E F L E X I O N.

THE consideration, that every man must one day give a strict account of every thought, word, and action that ever past in his body, during its

cohabitation with the soul, should be of such weight with us, as to keep us always on our guard. When a man has a cause depending before an earthly tribunal, the consequence of which will either make or undo him, how assiduous is he in preparing his witnesses, informing his counsel in the nature and strength of his evidence, and doing every thing that may contribute to the success of an affair on which his whole depends? He will not rely absolutely on the strength of the argument, or the supposed goodness of his cause; but he will likewise examine whether it has not a weak side, whether it has not some flaws and openings which his adversary may take an advantage of, that in time he may make such provision as will prevent his overthrow in the day of trial. At the day of judgment thou wilt have more at stake than the value of ten thousand worlds. Then will be tried the issue betwixt God and thee, how thou hast behav'd thy self in that high trust, or even in the lowest situation in which thou wer't stationed in the world, whether thou hast wasted or improved those talents which thy Lord gave thee to traffick with; whether thou hast hid them in thy bosom, or hast taken every opportunity to make the most of them for the honour of God, and the service of thy fellow creatures.

Conscience will then be both witness and jury, and either acquit or condemn thee according to the judgment which that shall give; and God Almighty will immediately pronounce sentence upon thee, whether it be to instate thee in immortal bliss and glory, or sink thee in everlasting misery.

If death were the worst thing to be fear'd, few would endure the hardships and miseries of this life.

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What signifies, would they say, the shock of dissolution, since it would but be of few minutes continuance, when thereby we should cut short whole years of pain and affliction? But when they consider that death does not end their being, and that by such an act of violence upon themselves they incur the wrath of God, and must answer for it to an omnipotent and an inexorable judge; this consideration makes them submit patiently to all the pains, injuries and afflictions with which human life is attended, and wait, with due resignation, the hour appointed for their dissolution.

Whoever therefore hopes or expects to meet his judge with pleasure and satisfaction, must make good use of the present opportunity that is now in his hands; he must employ all his powers and faculties in the love and service of God, and to the benefit of his fellow creatures; that when he is summon'd to give in his accompts to his sovereign Lord and Master, he may, like that honest servant, receive that glorious eulogium, *Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

CHAP. XXV.

Of zeal in the reformation of our lives.

BE fervent in prayer, serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11. says the Apostle; and such indeed it highly concerns every one to be in his service. For what end do we propose, by dedicating ourselves in solemn vows to Christ? Or why do we
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renounce the world and its vanities ; but that by these sacred ties we may be engaged to be watchful and diligent to adorn our persons and actions, to conform our selves to the image of God, by living to him, and like him, and not after the rate of carnal men ? Let not therefore these good resolutions cool in your minds ; but be zealous in piety and virtue. Consider that you shall shortly receive an ample recompence for all your pious labours, and see a happy end of grief, fear, and hardship. Be content with *travel and pain* for a very little while, and *you shall be sure to find rest, and peace and joy to your souls.* *The yoke is easy and the burden is light ;* Matth. xxi. 28, 30. *but the weight of glory is far more exceeding and eternal,* 2 Cor. iv. 16. Do you be careful to discharge your part, and then you need never doubt but God will make good his. Support and encourage your self with the full assurance of obtaining the crown ; but beware that assurance do not degenerate into presumption ; nor the prospect of blifs, which should excite a more active and chearful obedience, become an occasion of spiritual security and sloth.

I remember a person, who was irresolute and wavering in the concerns of his soul, divided between hope and fear, humbly besought the Lord that he might have some assurance of his own perseverance ; and expressing, how happy he should think himself, could he but be satisfied in this point. Whereupon he thought he was immediately answer'd from within, *Well, and supposing you could be assured of this, what wouldst thou do ? Do but act now, as you would think your self oblig'd to do in that case, and never question your persevering.* By this comfortable reply he was comforted and strengthened ; and, instead of indulging any cur-



S^T LUKE 14 Verse 23

*the Parable of y^e Lord who filled his House
with Guests from y^e Highways and Hedges.*



rious enquiries into events, or anxious doubts concerning the success of his endeavours, he immediately applied himself to consider what God expected from him, and to set about the performance of that, without more to do. *Trust in the Lord, and be doing good*, says the Psalmist; *commit thy way to him, and he shall bring it to pass*, Pl. xxxvii. 5, 6.

The great and common obstacle to a vigorous pursuit of virtue is the dreadful notion men form to themselves of the difficulties that attend it, and how laborious a thing religion is. It is very true, exalted piety will cost many a fore conflict. But even this consideration may afford some encouragement; when we consider, that the difficulty of the undertaking, and the violence of the opposition, add to the glory of the triumph, and entitle the conqueror to a crown so much brighter, as the toil and hazard of the victory won was greater. For, the more a man subdues himself, and does honour to the divine grace, by rendring it victorious over flesh and blood; the larger measures of that grace he shall obtain from God, and become more exemplary in the world.

There are not, however, in all men the same passions, or at least the same degrees of them, to master and mortify. But tho' a man, whose affections are strong, and his disposition by nature or custom more stubborn and averse to virtue, hath more difficulties to encounter; yet if this man's resolutions be firmer, and his endeavours be proportionably greater, he shall be able to make a better progress in virtue than others of a quieter temper, and less rebellious passions, if at the same time they are disposed to ease and inactivity.

Now in this undertaking, two things are especially

cially necessary for promoting it. The *first* is, To observe the natural bent of one's temper and constitution; and that we take care to bend nature the contrary way, by keeping at a distance from all those temptations and occasions of sinning, with which we feel our selves most easily beset, and strongly inclin'd to comply. The *other*, to discover our peculiar defects, and labour earnestly to attain those virtues which we most want.

And as this knowledge of our own frailties and imperfections is greatly instrumental to our improvement, so we should be careful to profit by what we see amiss in others, and to be particularly concern'd for avoiding and subduing those habits, which we observe most offensive, in them with whom we converse. For the commonness of any ill practice is so far from lessening the blame of those who copy after it, that it is the direct contrary; and such examples should be look'd upon, as marks which discover to us where the rocks and sands lie; such as are set to warn us to shun the danger not to invite us to run into it. Indeed a wise and good man will turn examples of all sorts, to his own advantage. The good he will make his patterns, and strive to equal or excel them; the bad he will by all means avoid. Or if by comparison the deformity of his neighbour's actions shew him the ugliness of his own, he will be the more careful of his future conduct, and think it a happy occasion that he is thus taught wisdom by the folly of others. For we often see and condemn that in the behaviour of others, which self-love will not let us discern; or partiality let us condemn, in our selves. And this should make us cautious, when we remember, that the eyes of others are as sharp, as critical observers, as severe judges of us
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and all we do, as ours can possibly be of them. From this universal disposition in all mankind, to observe and judge one another, proceeds, no doubt, that pleasing approbation of good, or vehement dislike of bad examples. For what indeed gives us a more sensible satisfaction than the seeing men, in every point acting agreeably to their character? When they, who call themselves by the name of Christ, and pretend in a peculiar manner to belong and be resigned up to him, are eminent in good works and heavenly dispositions; when they submit entirely to his yoke, and think nothing too much to do or suffer in obedience to his will; how pleasing, how delightful a sight is this? But how offensive, how very shocking, when they who make the same external profession, shall dishonour and defile it by a scandalous and profligate conversation; and, instead of that severe, that spiritual and heavenly life, to which their very name, and the pattern of their Master obliges them, give themselves up to all manner of excess, and wallow in the most brutish and abominable pollutions? But, even where men are not thus degenerated; where the cares and business of the world divert and draw them off from better employments, 'tis unseemly to others, and of ill consequence to themselves, to neglect their proper concern, and engage their thoughts and time in matters which have no relation to that which should be their main design.

Stir your self up therefore to duty, by the remembrance of your station, who you are, and what you have oblig'd your self to be. Constantly retain in your mind a lively idea of Christ crucified. Consider carefully his life, and let the perfection of that, shame you into the reforming your own: Your own, I say, whose very *baptism* re-

presents your profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour, and to be made like unto him; and yet, after so many years being called a Christian, you are still too far from being one, if dying to sin, and living to righteousness, as your Jesus died and rose again for you, be that which makes a Christian, and distinguishes him from other men. If persons dedicated to piety and virtue, would but attentively fix their thoughts upon the actions and sufferings of Christ, this singly would furnish them with instructions and motives abundantly sufficient for their purpose. St. Paul, we know, determined to know nothing but *Jesus Christ and him crucified*; and this indeed, truly known, is the best, the most useful and most comprehensive learning.

This inspires men with an eager holy zeal, and renders them not only circumspect, but cheerful in their duty; it makes them do what he commands with diligence, and suffer all that he requires with patience and submission. Whereas a negligent and lukewarm Christian punishes himself; his life is one perpetual torment, for want of entire resignation and fervent love; trials and afflictions bear hard upon his spirit, and the good he attempts is with reluctance and against the grain. He feels not the support of spiritual comforts; he knows it will be to no purpose to have recourse to worldly ones; or, if he might, they will avail him nothing; and so he is left destitute of all. For by transgressing the rules prescribed in the Gospel, he hazards the safety of his soul; and by seeking relief in things that can afford him none, he creates fresh torments to himself; because the things on which he would depend cannot satisfy his conscience, but will be sure

to leave some distaste and bitterness behind them. And who can be easy under the perpetual reproaches of his own ill conduct, and chuses a remedy worse than the disease?

To this pattern let us by Christ himself, let us add those of the apostles, and other eminent worthies in the first ages of the Church. These will convince us what excellencies mere men are capable of ; and if we heartily aspire after their perfection, we may assure our selves of God's assistance, and may confidently promise our selves, that if we have an equal degree of zeal we shall be supported by an equal measure of grace and strength. Observe then the simplicity of their lives, their fervent prayers and heavenly meditations ; observe the great and happy efficacy of them, in raising those holy persons above the world and its temptations, and rendering their conversation all heavenly and divine, even whilst upon earth. It were indeed to be wished, that we could so far mortify and subdue flesh and sense, that the praises of God, and attendance upon his commands, the contemplation of his glories, and the ravishing satisfaction of devout minds, might be our constant and most delightful employment. And happy should we be, if the necessary cares of life did not distract our thoughts, nor interrupt those holy exercises. But these delights are reserved for a future and better state ; we cannot here be so refined, we cannot be excused from the incumbrances of the body, and its inseparable frailties and necessities ; and therefore though we may use these worldly comforts, we must not place our happiness in them ; our bodies, indeed, must subsist upon them, but our souls should relish nothing but God. Whatever his providence thinks most

most proper for us, we are to receive with meekness and contentedness ; as being well assured, that his wisdom *can*, and his goodness *will* chuse and ordain what is best. *In the day of prosperity we may rejoice*, but that joy must be so tempered with gratitude and moderation, as neither to swell into insolence and pride, nor to engage our affections in the love of the world. *In the days of adversity we are to consider*, and receive the most afflicting accidents, without murmuring or discontent. In every change of circumstances, our minds must be entirely resigned to God ; for he is all in all, eternal and unchangeable ; perfect and happy in himself, absolute and sole Lord of the universe ; and every creature is and ought to be entirely at his disposal.

But tho' he be always the same, and can at any time do what is good in his sight ; yet this is far from being our case. Our being is frail, and of short continuance ; and this should excite us to diligence, *to work while it is day, because our night cometh on apace, wherein no man can work*. Consider therefore, that death is unavoidable, and how soon, you know not ; be afraid therefore lest that fatal hour overtake you, before the great business of life be finished. Remember that the time, yours once, can never be yours again : The wealth of both the *Indies* cannot redeem one single opportunity which you have once let slip ; and therefore, lose none for the future, nor suffer one hour to slide by, without its due improvement.

True piety is not to be attained without great pains and diligence ; and if you be cool and slothful in the pursuit of it, the moment that you gain not ground, you lose it. For the affairs of our souls can never stand still ; but as oft as we neglect our duty, we decline and fall back again toward sin, or

at least into a careless remissness in spiritual concerns: But if we cherish our zeal, and constantly blow up its holy fires, by a vigorous attendance upon our main business, the duties of religion, we shall soon feel the comfort of this kindly warmth; and all the difficulties we found or formed to our selves, will gradually wear off. God will give more grace to him that improves what he has already given him, and virtue every day will disclose her charms, and make us more in love with her. Then we shall experimentally find, that the Wise Man's description of virtue is true, *That her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Prov. iii. I readily own that the task, I am now advising you to undertake, is exceeding laborious and great: no bodily toil is to be compared to it; nor any conquest over temporal enemies so hazardous and expensive, as that which we gain upon our selves, and the adversary of souls. But as the difficulty is great, so will the benefit and glory likewise be. This battle must be fought, and won, or we are lost for ever; and he, who does not inure himself to conquer, by subduing less temptations, will never be able to encounter with more violent and trying ones; and infirmities once yielded to, grow insensibly to stubborn habits of vice. This is a daily warfare, and we may daily reap the fruits of it. For every night will crown us with fresh triumph, and the reflection upon a day well spent yield us joys more pleasing than all the laurels of the greatest conqueror. Since therefore every day's behaviour is of such mighty importance with respect to our spiritual affairs; beware lest any pass unprofitably. Watch continually over thy self, and be vigilant that this necessary fervour cool not, for want of care to cherish and excite it. Remember

member that your salvation is the trust committed to your charge ; a trust of greater moment than the whole world ; and therefore, whatever becomes of the rest, be sure to secure one. To admonish and reprove your brethren, while you forget your self, is a most preposterous course ; 'tis neglecting the province assigned to you, and invading another man's. You have no right to take the mote out of *their* eye, till the beam be first cast out of *your own*, Matth. vii. If then you would avoid the imputation of hypocrisy, begin to reform your self, and be sure to do that effectually. For the greater violence you are content to put upon your own inclinations, and the sorer conflicts you undergo, the greater your reward, and the more abundant will be your joy.

R E F L E X I O N.

A sincere Christian has, of all men, the greatest reason to keep a watch over his own actions, that he neither offends God, nor wrongs his own soul. He is under the highest obligations to walk conformably to the rules of his profession. If we consider him with respect to his baptismal engagements, as vowing to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil ; if we consider the inestimable value that was paid to ransom his soul, which was enslav'd to sin, and just ready to be imprison'd in everlasting chains of darkness ; if we consider him with respect to the love of a merciful God who found out a way to satisfy and appease his own justice, to which the sinner had render'd himself obnoxious ; if with regard to the affectionate concern of a gracious Redeemer, who laid down his own life to reconcile him to an offended God ;

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or what he owes to the Holy Spirit, who has given him a light of his miserable condition by nature, and wrought in him those virtues and graces which are the divine characteristick of the children of God: I say, If a christian Believer is consider'd in all, or any of these lights, every argument to press him to walk worthy of his vocation, one would think, was entirely needless.

Who would be anxiously solicitous to procure the things of this life, which he knows death will deprive him of? He who has laid up his hopes in heaven, and is firmly persuaded that an immortal and a never-failing inheritance is reserved for him on the other side the grave, can never be much in love with any thing he possesses upon this earth, where every thing is changeable, fleeting, vain, and transitory.

He that would make any tolerable progress in virtue, must not only form good resolutions for that purpose, but put those resolutions in practice; nor must he content himself with doing now and then a good action, but he must proceed in a regular course of piety; he ought never to think he has done enough, so long as it is in his power to do more; his heart should be entirely fixed on divine objects, and then his hands will be always filled with good works; and whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he will do all to the praise and glory of God.

He that would fight the good fight of faith, must run with patience the race that is set before him; he need always to be upon his guard, considering the enemies he has to encounter. He must expect the devil, that grand adversary of mankind, will be continually laying snares in his way, to entrap his soul, and set him at variance with his God;

many will be the allurements and temptations in the world that will court his embraces, but have death and ruin in their enjoyment; and as from without thou wilt meet with innumerable incitements to sin and folly, thou wilt at the same find an enemy within ready to caress and close with whatever shall be offer'd by these flattering, yet deadly adversaries of thy soul; and if ever thou hopest to triumph over the stratagems of Satan, and the alluring vanities of the world, thou must first conquer and subdue the lusts of the flesh. A city may be fortified with strong ramparts, surrounded with morasses, and to human thought seem impregnable; but if there is want of provisions and ammunition, or if its garrison is weak and treacherous, it must soon surrender to the victorious enemy. Thus, if the soul is not sufficiently provided with the virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit, if there is not a strict hand kept over our passions and corrupt inclinations, it must in the end expect to be miserably defeated of all those glorious rewards which the persevering Christian will be entitled to.

All men are not equally qualified for all things; some have larger capacities to understand and comprehend the will of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures; and to whomsoever much is given, of them will much be required. Others there are who can neither form an argument themselves, nor readily apprehend the strength of one when press'd by an opponent; they are apt to take sophistry for sheer reasoning, and so often make wrong conclusions from premises that are not true in themselves; thus are they frequently baffled out of their faith and religion, because they are not able to confute their adversary. What then must the weak Chris-

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tian make the standard of truth when he is thus attack'd; or, how must he defend himself? Let him consider that it is the word of God which is the only rule of faith, and by that alone he will be tried in the great day of account; and if he is diligent to square his actions by the plain and easy precepts that he finds every where dispersed in the Gospel; if he endeavours to form his life upon that excellent model which *Jesus Christ* has left us of himself in the New Testament, he will be certainly right in his practice; *for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. Useless and vain then are all curious speculations into things above thy reach; nor think that thou wilt ever be accountable for what is not within the compass of thy knowledge; keep thy conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; do thy duty in the station in which God has placed thee in the world; and however weak thy capacity may be, God will accept the willing mind. Pray earnestly for his assistance and the influences of his Holy Spirit, and thou wilt find help in every time of need; he will give thee strength to subdue the unruly lusts of thy flesh; he will give thee grace, that shall make thee superior to every temptation; and he will enable thee to baffle all the arts and stratagems that the devil may form against the peace and happiness of thy soul.

No man can make any great progress in religion, when he performs the duties of it rather out of fear, than from a principle of love. Coolness and indifference with respect to the commands and law of God, a certain carelessness in devotion, and a kind of backwardness and reluctance to the practice of true piety; these are ill signs of a bad heart,

and that all is not right within. Where the true love of God is, there will be such a zeal and holy fervour as will carry us through all the duties of religion, how severe and difficult soever they are, with pleasure and the most agreeable satisfaction. We shall think nothing too great to do, nothing too heavy and afflicting to suffer, if thereby the honour and glory of God is promoted, the beauties and excellencies of his worship displayed and recommended, and the name of the blessed *Jesus* brought more into esteem and reverence among our fellow mortals.

Jesus Christ has set us the exactest pattern for our imitation. *He went about doing good.* When but twelve years of age we find him very earnestly employed about his Father's business, and wondering that his parents should imagine that he could be otherwise taken up. A little before his departure out of this world, he appeals to the Father for the probity of his actions and the purity of his life; *I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,* John xvii. 4.

Happy will that man be, who, at the hour of his death, shall be able to make this comfortable reflexion, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;* from whence will naturally follow this conclusion, *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also who love his appearing,* 2 Timothy. iv. 7, 8.

The End of the First Book.

OF THE
IMITATION
OF
Jesus Christ.

The Second Book.

CHAP. I.

The Life of the spiritual Man.

THE Kingdom of GOD is within you, says our Blessed LORD, Luke xvii. 21. Turn thy self then entirely to God, love him with all thy heart and all thy soul, and take a final farewell of this wretched world, and thou shalt find sweet content, and comfort unspeakable. Learn to despise these outward vanities, and seek after pure and spiritual satisfactions; place all thy hopes, thy happiness, thy thoughts on these divine enjoyments, and thou shalt feel this kingdom spring up and grow within thee. *For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost;* Rom. xiv. 17. A joy which the Saints alone possess, and in which wicked and worldly-minded men have

have no share. Christ will approach to those that fly to him for refuge, meet and embrace them in his arms, and fill them with his heavenly consolations. He knocks at the door of thy heart, and waits to come in, and only stays till thou hast swept and garnish'd thy soul, and prepared an apartment, clean and fit to receive so pure, so divine an inhabitant; for all his charms and glories shine inward; they are not like the gaudy pomps and glittering outsides of earthly ornaments, but lie deep in the breast of his saints. There he displays his beauty, there he entertains with his sweet conversation, there he bestows his ravishing comforts, there he pours forth the abundance of his peace, and the intimacy of his friendship.

Come then, believing soul, and diligently prepare thy heart for thy beloved; that heavenly spouse, who will not disdain this poor and homely mansion, and only asks thy love and care to make it worthy of him. Hear his own gracious promise, *If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* Admit therefore this blessed guest; cast out the crowd of worldly cares and desires; suffer no partner in thy breast, but reserve thy whole heart for this one inhabitant. Christ is enough, for he is all the world; and if thou hast him, thou hast riches, and honour, and plenty of every good thing. He will be thy Master, thy Counsellor, thy Agent, thy Friend; he will take all thy cares upon himself, and manage all thy concerns to thy greatest advantage; thou wilt need no other assistant, nor ask relief from men? For what canst thou expect from men, whose power is so weak, and their affections so changeable. They are inconstant and wavering, and mock the hopes

of those that build their dependance on their assistance; but Christ endureth for ever, and is a sure help in all the extremities of his servants. Supposing we had all the sincerity and zeal for our service, that man is capable of giving; yet still he is but mere man, mortal and frail, and cannot always have the ability, though his inclination be ever so good, to relieve and do us service. Since then so little confidence is to be placed in an arm of flesh, we ought not to be greatly concerned if we are left destitute of human succours; nor be surprized if he should grieve, and labour to do us harm. For this is frequently the case, the effect of a fickle temper, that those very persons, who to day are our dearest friends, to morrow shall be our worst enemies; and they, who now are our most malicious adversaries, within a little while appear on our side. Nor can it well be otherwise, in persons so fickle, so liable to change with every breath of wind. Place then thy hope and trust in him alone, with *whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. Let *him* alone be the object of thy fear and love. in *him* thou art sure to find a constant and powerful friend; one who will heartily espouse thy cause, and order matters better than thou thy self, if left to thine own choice, could possibly do. Alas! thou hast here no continuing city, but art a stranger and sojourner, and must expect to find no settlement, till possess'd of, and united to Christ.

Why dost thou anxiously look out for ease and a settled happiness, in a place which is not, which never can be thy rest? Thy conversation ought to be in heaven, for there is thy home; and all things here should be no otherwise esteemed or regarded, than as refreshments and conveniences given to support thee in thy journey thither: Things that are per-

perpetually passing away from too, as fast as time and mortality can carry thee. Do not then imagine, that they can stay with thee, or thou with them; but look upon them with an eye of indifference, and keep thy soul disengaged. For if thou let them possess thy affections, they will enslave thy mind, and be thy eternal ruin. Assert then and preserve thy native liberty, by raising thy soul above this vain world, and fixing thy desires and meditations upon things that are unseen and eternal. converse with Christ in prayer, and let this be so constant, so intent, and so fervent, as to contract an intimate familiarity with him.

Perhaps his glories and divine excellencies are objects to reined, too sublime for thy contemplations to dwell upon with relish and sensible delight. But he hath condescended to thy mean capacity; and, by becoming man, afflicted man, hath furnished us with matter of meditation, fitted to our minds, while dwelling in flesh. Contemplate then his poverty and sufferings; and if thou canst not raise thy thoughts to Christ sitting on his throne, behold him hanging on his cross; take sanctuary in his stripes and wounds, and death; those stripes by which alone thou canst be healed; that death, by which alone thou canst have life. And, if these be well attended to, they will administer wonderful strength and comfort, in thy afflictions; enable thee to bear wrongs with ease, contempt with patience, calumny and detraction with content. What! What! was the Son of God a scorn of men, and an outcast of the people? Was the King of heaven reduced to wants and necessities upon earth, and had not so much as *where to lay his head*? Luke ix. 58. Was he, who loved his enemies so affectionately, as even to lay down his life for them? Did Christ

Christ submit chearfully to suffer, and to be despis'd? And dost thou, wretched Sinner, murmur and complain, when poverty or contempt come upon thee? when thy friends desert, or thy enemies slander thee? Did he undergo the malice and *contradiction* of men, and dost thou expect that all men should favour, assist, and speak of thee with respect and honour? Do not, wretched man, entertain so vain a hope. It cannot be; it is not fit it should: For could'st thou be exempted from injuries and afflictions, what opportunity could there ever be for the exercise of thy patience? If thou should'st have nothing to vex or cross thee in the whole course of thy life, what evidence wouldest thou have of thy friendship and love for Christ? How wouldest thou express thy likeness to him? This the Apostle tells us, is the condition, this the way that leads us to happiness; and they who would reign with Christ, must not think much to suffer with him, and for him, *2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.*

Oh! had we but, with *Thomas*, put our fingers into the print of his nails, and thrust our hands into his side; *John xx.* had we but acquainted ourselves with his sufferings, by deep and serious consideration, and tasted indeed the astonishing greatness of his love, the joys and miseries of this life would soon be of small esteem in our account; or rather, we should make the most proper use of them; we should rejoice in tribulation, and triumph in the opposition, and shame, and unjust dealings of men, which draw us to so much nearer and more lively resemblance of the blessed *Jesus*. For the love of Christ teaches us to despise ourselves; and they, who do so, will freely bear the reproaches and contempts put upon them by others. A man, whose soul is united to Christ in fervent love, and

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who is no longer a servant to his passions and worldly concerns; this man, I say, is as it were a new Creature, he can have recourse to God without distraction, lives as it were by and within himself; nay, is raised above himself, and enjoys heaven while yet upon earth. He that hath shook off the falacies and prepossessions of sense, that sees and judges things, not after the deceitful measures of common opinion, but by the standard of truth, and their own nature; he is the wise, the truly learned man, and this wisdom he is taught, not by human methods, but by Instructions from above, from God, the fountain and perfection of all wisdom.

Such a man can never want opportunities of enjoying and improving his happiness. The interruptions, which other men lament, no way affect him; for nothing can take him from himself; and so long as he retires into his own breast, he cannot be destitute of a fit place, and proper season, for any holy exercise. If business and the world at any time call him aside, he always acts and converses there with the greatest caution and reserve, and keeps it in his power to recollect and retreat again at pleasure. Bodily labour hinders him not, for this employs but the least part of him; the cares of life are the least of his concern; but he suits his temper to his present circumstances, and studies only to keep his mind easy and composed; the unreasonableness, the folly, and unaccountable reverseness of other mens humour and behaviour, disturb not him, for he finds enough of his own to employ him. In short, every man finds more or less vexation and obstruction in the affairs of his soul, as he engages himself more or less in the world; and as he chuses or refuses to make those things,

things his care, which are, or are not properly so.

A man, whose mind is purify'd from the dross of sensuality, and disposed, as it ought to be, to God and heavenly things, will find that every accident of life contributes to his advantage. For the true reason of our inordinate passion and disquiet, when things happen contrary to our expectations or desires, is the want of that resignation and composure, which never fails to quiet the Spirits of those who are mortify'd to themselves and the world, and disengaged from the vanities and false appearances of happiness here below. Nothing so infects and defiles, so entangles and perplexes a man's mind, as a sordid love of the creatures. But when we can once persuade ourselves to despise these trifling, these deceitful comforts without us, our retirements into our own breasts will be frequent and free; our joys resulting from them undisturbed; and our contemplations of heaven and heavenly things full of rapture and divine transport.

REFLEXION.

THAT man truly enjoys the pleasures of a religious life, who frequently retires within himself, and contemplates the wonders of his redemption, who employs his thoughts on divine objects, and who can absolutely exclude the things of this world in all his approaches to God. What a sweet serenity does such a soul enjoy; what unspeakable delight must overspread all her powers and faculties, when nothing interrupts her spiritual converse with her dear Redeemer; when nothing stands in the way to blind the eye of her faith; when there is nothing to clog the exercise of every grace;

when the world and all its vanities, the flesh and all its lusts, are made to keep their due distance? This is the Time that Christ chuses to pay his visits of love, and entertain the believer with a full view of himself in all his glorious and divine perfections.

When a believer is employ'd in this heavenly manner, how little, how trifling and contemptible do all the glories and illustrious vanities of this world appear in his eye? He would not sell one smile of Christ, one favourable look of his gracious countenance, for an universe of riches, or the pride of all the earthly titles and honours that the imagination of man can conceive, or his wit invent. He has riches that the world knows not of; he has honours more inestimable than the majesty of kings and the laurels of conquerors; his possessions are more valuable, than if he inherited the whole world, and every tract of land equal in goodness and richness to the garden of *Eden*; for he possesses Christ.

Happy then, superlatively is that man, that can call Christ his own, has a place in his love and friendship, an interest in his sacred blood and meritorious sufferings; who can experimentally say, Christ is mine, and I am his.

Cleanse then thy soul from the pollutions of sin, and make it a mansion fit for the reception of the blessed *Jesus*, a guest infinitely more agreeable than those passions and lusts which have so long tyrannized in and over thee; his love will be a continual feast; *his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.*

CHAP. II.

The Benefit and Excellence of Humility.

BE not over sollicitous what friend thou hast to appear in thy behalf, nor what enemies employ their malice in giving thee uneasiness and trouble; but, let it be thy peculiar care to keep God thy friend and helper, and be sure to preserve a good conscience; for, so long as that condemns thee not, thou mayest depend upon it God will be thy friend, and assist and bless thy righteous undertakings; and those whom he protects, no wickedness or malice shall be able to hurt. Suffer indeed thou may'st, but if thou learn to suffer without murmuring and impatience, thou shalt certainly see the salvation of God; which, tho' it may seem to tarry, yet wait for it; for he best knows the proper season for thy deliverance, and therefore you ought entirely to rest upon his wise disposal. Thou need'st not in the least question but he will deliver thee; for the relieving men in distress, and wiping off the shame and reproach of his servants, are acts in which God delights to signalize his providence. But it often falls out that the doing it should be deferred; since the discovery of our failings by other people, and the reproofs we meet with upon their account, have frequently a very happy effect upon our minds, and render us more modest and humble in our own esteem of ourselves.

Humility is a virtue of so general, so exceeding good influence, that we can scarce purchase it at too dear a rate. For he, who is lowly in his own eyes, and sensible of his own failings, never thinks much

to acknowledge his offences against his neighbour, and is ready to give all reasonable satisfaction to any who have just cause to be angry with him. Nor does this forwardness to reconciliation lay him open to the insults of injurious men; for God charges his providence with a peculiar protection of the humble, and will give them comfort in all their sorrows. To these he promises large portions of his grace, and that, *they who abase themselves, shall afterwards be exalted*, Luke xiv. Psal. xxv. To these he reveals his secrets, and draws them to himself with the cords of love and kindness. The humble enjoys a constant calm in his mind, and receives the reproaches and affronts of men without much disturbance; for he considers, that God, and not the world, is his hope; and if his favour be but secured, the rest can be but of very little account. In short, this virtue is so necessary, so fundamental a one, that no man ought to esteem himself a proficient in goodness, who is not yet arrived to that pitch of it, which teaches him to think himself the least of all Saints, and inferior to all men.

R E F L E X I O N.

HUMILITY is a virtue of that amiable nature, that is recommends us to the favour both of God and man. He who submissively resigns himself to the divine will, and patiently endures the afflictive dispensations of providence, will find in the end that God will make a way for his escape, or so order it, that his very afflictions shall be of greater advantage to him, than if he had enjoy'd a continual run of prosperity.

Nor is humility less pleasing and agreeable to

men, than it is to God. Humble merit will be sure to find an advocate, while the proud boaster multiplies his enemies, by assuming to himself more than is his due, or at least more than his neighbours are willing to allow him. The humble man always claims less than he really deserves, for fear of encroaching upon the property of another, and of taking that to himself which his neighbour has a better right to. Thus by disclaiming the merit of his services, he often obtains a reward greatly beyond his expectation, and, in his opinion, much superior to his desert.

The humble man receives a reproof as an act of friendship; and to tell him of his faults, he will acknowledge as a greater favour than to flatter him for excellencies, to which he has no pretence; the first gives him an opportunity of correcting what is amiss in himself; the other serves only to hide his errors from him, and to set a greater value upon himself than he ought. *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth, Matt. v. 3, 5.*

CHAP. III.

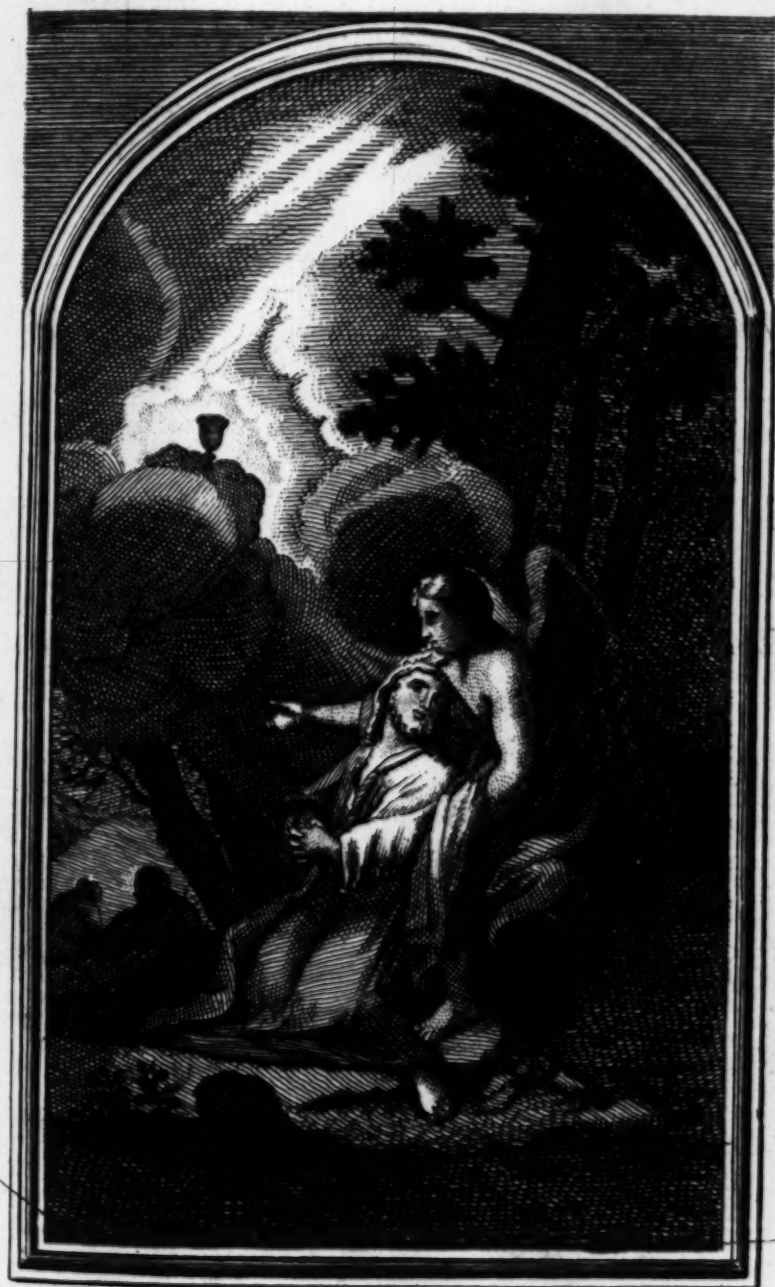
Of the Peace-maker.

IN the first place, secure peace at home; and when thy own breast is thus composed, thou wilt then be in a proper disposition to reconcile and make peace among thy neighbours. And this indeed, is a very worthy and reputable action;

tion; it brings greater and juster commendation to a man, and more benefit to those with whom he converses, than wit or learning, or any other accomplishments which are so much admired. And as every thing is set off by its contrary, so here, the mischief of a contentious disposition is unconceivable; for nothing can be so innocent, nothing so well and kindly intended, but a man of this disposition will be sure to put some ill meaning upon it; but the good natur'd man will be as careful on the other hand, to give every thing the best construction it is capable of. For a peaceable man is not apt to suspect ill of any; but the peevish and quarrellsome are rack'd and tormented with a thousand jealous fancies, and can neither be quiet themselves, nor content to let other people be so. They are very free in saying what they should not; and as backward in doing what they should; diligent observers of their neighbour's duty, and notoriously negligent of their own. Whereas, in truth, our Saviour's rule should always be our measure; for no man is fit to censure or correct his brother, by pulling *the mote out of his eye*, till he be effectually reformed, by casting *the beam out of his own eye*. And how happy should we be, how eased of detraction, and calumny, and censoriousness, if none would take the liberty to condemn or censure others, till they were first qualified for that office, by a thorough reformation of their own manners, and not liable to reproof themselves?

Who can forbear observing, how manifestly unequal we are in our dealings? Every one is ingenious at framing excuses, and making large allowances for what liberties he takes himself; but how few admit the apologies alledged by others in their own vindication? How much more just and

reasonable



S^t MATTHEW 26. Verse 39.
*Christ prays the Father that the Cup might
pass from him*



reasonable would it be, to pass a favourable construction upon the actions of others, and turn the severity of our censure of our own? If you expect indulgence from others, you must first learn to bear with your brethren, and exercise the good nature you expect, whenever an occasion offers. For men are best taught by examples, and the measure we mete gives us a right to receive the same again. But is this charity? Is this humility? Far from it; for these incline us to condemn, and be angry with no body but ourselves. To keep up an intimacy with men of goodness and temper, is but a very vulgar virtue; this is easy and agreeable, for every man naturally desires quiet and good usage, and cannot help paying a respect to persons who love, and please, and are like him. The difficulty is, to conduct yourself inoffensively with men of rugged, intractable, and fierce dispositions, with those who make little or no conscience of what they do or say, and have no regard to truth and justice in their dealings. And he who can do this, is a truly great soul, and sets a noble and commendable pattern of philosophical, or rather of christian fortitude.

There are some men, who cherish peace and quiet with themselves and all the world; and there are other vile sort of wretches, the very reverse of these, who delight to fish in troubled waters, and are neither easy themselves, nor will suffer any body else to be so; perpetually troublesome to others, but much more tormenting and vexatious to themselves. And there is also a third sort, who are not barely satisfied with giving no offence, but make it their business to reconcile others, who are at variance; and to restore that peace, which they were never instrumental in disturbing. But after all, our

life here is expos'd to perpetual misery and contention ; and the utmost degree of peace we must expect to arrive at, does not consist in being free from injuries and crosses, but in bearing them with humility, and not being provok'd to impatience, and angry resentments. And therefore, the more any man hath brought himself to suffer, and the more submissively he bears afflictions and wrongs, the more calm and serene his mind will be. For, the peculiar satisfaction of this person is, that he hath gained a conquest over himself, that he is above the reach of fortune, hath the world at his command, is a friend of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

REFLEXION.

GREAT is the advantage the peaceable man has over him that is quarrellsome and contentious; when every thing is disturb'd and in combustion about him, he enjoys a perfect tranquillity; the affronts and abuses put upon him by others, give him no uneasiness, if he is assur'd that the whole tenour of his actions will bear witness to his innocence. He is so sensible of the happiness of a quiet and tranquil mind, that he would not change it for all the riches and honours that this world can bestow, and is even surpriz'd how men can set any thing in competition with it.

Nor is he satisfied in enjoying this felicity himself, but is best pleas'd when he can inspire others with the same peaceable sentiments. When he sees friends or neighbours at variance, how does he labour to establish a right understanding betwixt them? And how unspeakable is his delight, if, through his means, a re-union is effected? To conciliate

ciliate differences, to make up breaches, and to bring contending parties to an happy coalition of sentiments, is more delightful to him than the most delicious and sumptuous feast.

But a passionate, litigious, and contentious man is the very pest and bane of society. His own family live in continual fear and anxiety; his neighbours avoid his company; and his friends have enough to do to make apologies for the extravagancies of his fractious temper.

And he not only gives uneasiness to all about him, but he is the author of his own unhappiness. Every object he meets with affords something to disturb him; the most trifling things that happen to disagree with his humour, ruffle and discompose him: so that he is not only a common disturber of the publick peace, but by the perverseness of his temper, contributes to his own misery. Great reason had *Solomon* for that expression, *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?* Prov. xxvii. 4. And again, *Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul,* Prov. xxii. 24. 25. Let us rather hearken to the advice of the Apostle, *Be not angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil,* Ephes. iv. 26.

C H A P. IV.

Of Purity and Sincerity.

SINCERITY and Purity are the two wings by which a man soars above the world. Sincerity regards the intention, Purity the affections; the first aspires and aims at a likeness to God; the latter makes us really like him. We should find no difficulty in performing any good action, if our minds were but free from all intemperate passion and desire. And this perfection of freedom we should certainly attain, if, in all our designs and undertakings, we had no other views than obedience to the will of God, and the promotion of our neighbour's welfare. Were but our minds thus fixed, and our intentions regulated, every thing would wonderfully contribute to our edification. We should study the book of nature with profit, and every line in that large volume would tend to our instruction. The smallest, and that which is commonly esteem'd the most despicable creature, would represent, as in a glass, the goodness of God to us. And the reason why these things are seen so little to our edification, is, because our minds are not rightly disposed, to draw those profitable and practical inferences, which very naturally result from them. For, as colours appear to our minds exactly as they are painted in the eye, so the judgment men make of all outward objects, depends upon the frame of the mind; and we argue upon, and pronounce concerning them just as we happen to be differently affected before hand.

If there be such a thing as true pleasure in this world, the man, pure in his heart, enjoys it. And if there be a hell upon earth, it is found in that man, who hath a guilty and polluted conscience. As iron loses its rust in the fire, and becomes bright and fulgent, like fire; so that zeal, by which we renounce the world, and turn entirely to God, purges away our filth, and changes us into new men. The lukewarm and indifferent Christian grudges a little labour, boggles at every difficulty, and seeks his satisfaction in worldly and external comforts; but if he sedulously applies himself to subdue his passions, and resolutely attempts to walk in the way of godliness, the hardships which at first discouraged him, grow familiar, and at length are none at all. All that God appoints him to do or suffer, becomes sensibly to him an *easy yoke and a light burthen*, and he finds *peace and rest to his soul*.

R E F L E X I O N.

THE peaceable man was the subject of the foregoing chapter; in this the purity of the heart, and simplicity of the intention are recommended; and indeed there is so near a relation between them, that they cannot well be separated; for there can be no true peace in the mind, while there is any pollution in the conscience. The fountain that is troubled, can never yield a clear and transparent stream; so where the conscience is not quiet and easy, there will be no lasting tranquillity in the soul.

A man that can challenge envy, and defy detraction itself, to impeach the sincerity of all his actions, stands calm and unruffled amidst all the pointed

pointed darts of calumny and reproach; conscious of his own integrity, he bids defiance to the malice of invenom'd tongues, and enjoys such a happiness in the serenity of his own mind, as is not in the power of his envious and insulting adversaries to deprive him of, and to which they themselves are utter strangers.

This is the blessed state of the man of a pure and upright heart; but how does he attain to this happy condition? Why, no otherwise than by observing an exact conformity to the will of God; by subduing the power of sin; mortifying all his inordinate affections and lusts; and studying the good and welfare of his neighbour. Thus it is, and thus alone we are enabled patiently to bear affliction and reproach; 'tis thus we blunt the edge of envy; and thus at length shall we obtain a glorious victory over the rage and malice of unjust and wicked persecutors; the greater their hatred, the brighter will our virtue shine; and their fiery violence will only serve as a file to our innocence, to make it shine clearer in the eyes of every beholder.

CHAP. V.

To know thyself, is the best knowledge.

IT is no uncommon thing, to have a mighty confidence in ourselves; when alas! the want both of abilities and performance is a certain proof both of our vanity and folly. For how small is the proportion of our gifts, in comparison of our own apprehensions concerning them? And how defective

fective is our wisdom and care to use and improve even that small proportion we have? The light that is in us shines but dimly; and by our neglect we suffer it to be quite extinguished. We are often blind to, and insensible of our own infirmities; we stumble and fall, and yet fancy we see; we commit horrible sins; and aggravate our guilt by defending those very sins; nay, we are sometimes so wretchedly deluded, as even to sanctify our wickedness by a pretence of zeal. We are very apt to censure the smallest faults of others; but we can seldom see the much greater of our own. The burthens and hardships we put upon others, seem reasonable, easy, and light; but if they give us the least and most trivial uneasiness, we presently cry out, *Who can bear it?* Whereas, would we but judge our own actions impartially, we should find little leisure and less reason to pass a severe and uncharitable sentence upon our brethren.

This then is the method of the wise and truly spiritual man; he employs his thoughts upon himself, and considers that this is his proper business and care; and is tender of other people's failings, from a due and humble consciousness of his own. Whatever fond opinions we may cherish of our own virtue, it is certain that religious and perfect we are not, nor ever can be, till we examine our own consciences diligently, and leave all the rest of the world to stand and fall by the judgment of their own master. Censoriousness and christian piety can never dwell together; for the fear of God would work us to a neglect of all things without us, and make us leave the judging of others to God, and their own consciences. The mind, which is not conversant with itself, is an idle wanderer, and all the learning in the world is fruitless and misemploy'd, whilst

whilst in the midst of his boasted knowledge, a man continues in profound ignorance of that, which in point both of duty and advantage, it most concerns him to know. True peace and satisfaction of mind can only be acquired by doing our own business; and friendship and charity are best preserved by forbearing any over-busy enquiries into the conduct and reputation of our neighbours.

By withdrawing ourselves from all worldly care, we give a certain proof of great proficience in goodness; for, by esteeming too highly of any thing here below, our value for God and heaven must be necessarily lessened and impaired. Let nothing therefore but God, and the things that be of God, seem grateful to the taste, worthy desiring or rejoicing in; and treat all that imaginary comfort, which the creatures pretend to administer, with the generous neglect and contempt that it deserves. For a soul entirely devoted to the love of God, will naturally despise every thing in comparison of him; and there is all the reason in the world why it should do so, when we consider that every thing else is frail and of short continuance, empty and unsatisfactory; but that God alone is eternal, omnipresent, infinite in every excellence; and therefore he is the best, he the only comfort and true joy of the soul, who alone can fill and exceed its largest desires.

R E F L E X I O N.

Know thyself, was a notable saying of a *Græcian* philosopher, and founded, no doubt, upon this maxim, that no man will ever gain the esteem of the world, who is blind to his own imperfections. For, who will put confidence in that man who has

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often miscarried in his affairs, by mistaking his own abilities? Who will set any value upon the actions of that person, how worthy soever they be, who himself claims greater merit from them than they really deserve? Self-sufficiency is a folly we are all prone to, and yet is what we all blame. Thus, by ascribing too much to ourselves, our brightest virtues are often obscur'd, and our merit lessen'd by being over-rated.

But would we set our numerous imperfections against our few excellencies; would we compare our prodigious ignorance with our little knowledge; our many worthless actions with the few deserving ones, what a strange alteration should we see in this different view of the scene! We might perhaps here and there see the weakly sparkle of a diamond dimly glimmering through heaps of rubbish; a shoot or two of grace, a sprigg of virtue, budding in a dunghill of pollutions, combating with the violence of stormy passions, almost choaked with the unwholesome fumes of fleshly lusts, ready to be nipt with the chilling frosts of negligence and infidelity, or burnt up by the heat of fiery trials and persecutions.

What is it we can then boast of? Have we any excellence or virtue that never man had? Sure, none will be so vain as to affirm he has; or, that there are not many who equal, and even excel him in those endowments which he values himself most upon.

Lay aside then all thy pride and vain-glory, think modestly of thy self; and from the knowledge of thy own weakness and inability, learn compassion to thy weak or erring brother.

The knowledge of thyself will make thee distrust thy own strength, and shew thee that God

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alone should be the only object of thy trust and confidence; in him alone thou wilt find rest for thy soul; and that he who hopes for happiness in another life, must not expect it as the consequence of his own merits, but as the purchase of him whose merit excels the collective worth of men and angels.

C H A P. VI.*The Joy of a good Conscience.*

THE glory and privilege of a good man consists in the testimony of a good conscience; for this is a continual feast and triumph: It sets him above the power of fortune, and makes the sharpest afflictions not only an exercise of his invincible patience, but a matter of undisturbed joy to him. Whereas neither wealth nor prosperity can procure ease and content to a guilty and self-condemning breast. Would'st thou then enjoy a sweet and uninterrupted tranquillity, keep all at peace within, and give thy own thoughts no cause to reproach thee. The greatest satisfaction we take, or promise ourselves, is either vain or dangerous, except that only which proceeds from a consciousness of having done our duty. The men thou seest so gay, so seemingly full of delight, are galled and itching within; they have no inward, no true contentment; and although they are in full pursuit of pleasure, yet they feel the truth of that sentence, and the sad effects of it hang over their hearts, that *there is no peace to the wicked*, Isa. lvii. 21. They may

may perhaps boast mightily of their enjoyments, put on an air of happiness, give out that their pomp and greatness secures them from misery; but these are all delusions, and ought not to gain our assent, or provoke our envy. We see not their inward tortures, nor are witnesses of those checks and terrors, which make retirement bitter and insupportable, and haunt them in their closets and their beds; but, though we cannot now see, yet there is a time coming when we shall see an angry God breaking out upon them in fury; their mighty projects come to nothing, and all the happiness they vainly boasted of, vanish like a dream.

While therefore these men pride themselves in their successes and outward enjoyments, thou mayest with equal satisfaction entertain thy afflictions. This is indeed to flesh and blood a hard task; but to a soul filled with grace and love, which knows and proposes to itself no other happiness but God, nothing is impracticable, nothing difficult. For what is this, but to rejoice in the fatherly care and affection of him, whose providence ordereth these sufferings for thy good? The glory which we give or receive from one another, is inconstant and transitory; it cannot last long, and while it does, some alloy of sorrows will ever attend and damp it. The good man's glory stands upon stronger foundations; it rises from within, and will last as long as that innocence which occasions it: Nay, it must last as long as God himself; for a careful obedience to his will, and his favour and approbation which follows that obedience, are the solid bases on which it stands; and these can never fail, so long as truth and justice continue impregnable. To him who aspires after eternal glory and honour, that which this world affords is of very little con-

sideration. And these are so very different, so inconsistent, that the love and sincere desires of the one are best proved by a neglect and disesteem of the other. Nay, not only the future, but the present happiness is best secured, by seeking the approbation of God alone; for nothing contributes more to an easy and quiet mind, than a disregard of the praise, and a contempt of the censures and reproaches of men.

A pure and quiet conscience does above all things dispose a man to rest satisfied with his condition; but especially, with regard to the opinion of the world, it is highly reasonable he should do so. For, what is any one really the better, or the worse, for what other people reports of him? Their commendations add nothing to his virtue, nor do their reproaches and scandal take any thing from it. The man is still the same; what his own actions and the judgment of God make him. This is the standard of our worth and happiness; neither more nor less belongs to us, than will be found to do so at the last great account; and that will depend, not upon that which others have supposed us to be, but upon what we really were in this world. The more therefore we consider the frame and temper of our own minds, the less impression will the characters and reports given us by others, make upon us: For, God seeth not as men see; they confine their observations to the face and outward appearance, but he searcheth and understands the heart; they look upon the action, and form a judgment from thence; he sees the intention, and condemns or acquits us according to our honesty and sincerity, or corrupt inclinations and wicked designs. And therefore a modest humble man is always mindful of his own duty, and has a
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mean opinion of his own performances. He neither seeks, nor feels any great matter of comfort, from any of the advantages which attend well-doing in this world; but considers whom he serves, and for whose sake he does it, and chearfully relies upon *him* alone, for the praise and reward of that which best deserves it. When we are not anxiously concerned about the the testimony and character which men may give us, then may we truly be said to have resigned ourselves to God, and to depend upon him, with that stedfast and holy confidence which becomes us. *Not he that commendeth himself* (no, nor he whom others commend neither) *is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*, 2 Corinth. x. 18. And therefore a good man lays aside, as much as may be, all concern with the world. His only view is to please God, whose approbation he only desires; and while he has this, and the witness of a good conscience, he considers all outward accidents as things remote, and foreign to his main design; and such as ought not much to affect him.

R E F L E X I O N.

THE peace of the mind is infinitely preferable to all the pleasures and gratifications of sense; these are generally attended with some vexation, and their end is commonly bitterness; but nothing can disturb or interrupt the comforts of a good conscience; that is proof against all the fiery darts of the devil; is easy under the heaviest load of calumny and reproach; the spite and malice of envy and malediction is lost upon it; tho' the body is loaded with irons, and sunk in the deepest dungeon, that is perfectly calm and serene; pains
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afflictions lose much of their impression where this is ; death, in its most ghastly shapes, puts on an agreeable aspect, when it meets with a conscience void of offence.

But woeful is the state of the man who carries in his breast that tormenting inmate, an evil conscience. If all the plagues and afflictions in the world were heap'd on the head of one man, the burthen would be light in comparison with that inflicted by a wounded conscience. It is not only the worst of evils in itself, but it aggravates every other evil that comes in the common course of providence. It is always restless and disturbed; it is frighten'd at a shadow; it flies when no man pursues. The flatteries and soothing commendations of friends are so many new stripes upon wounds that are already bleeding. While he lives, he carries a hell about him; and when he dies—the LORD have mercy on his soul.

If then we would enjoy that peace and tranquillity of mind, which alone will make all our afflictions light and easy; which alone can enable us to look death undauntedly in the face; and which alone can fortify us against the terrors of the day of judgment; let us, by faith, apply the Blood of Christ, *who, as the Apostle expresses it, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, that he might purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God,* Heb. ix. 14.

CHAP. VII.

Love Jesus Christ above all things.

HOW happy is that man, who feels and relishes the love of Jesus; who experiences the sweet of this love, and can even despise and hate himself for his Saviour's sake! For, tho' the love of ourselves be the very voice of reason and nature, yet the same voice commands us too, to quit a less valuable friend in exchange for a better. And this exchange he hath made necessary to our obedience, by requiring us, to love him only, above all things. And indeed *he* alone is worthy of our love; for the objects of this world, which are too apt to engage our affections, are uncertain and deceitful; but Christ is faithful and eternal, and will undoubtedly return and reward our love. He that places his confidence in any temporal comfort, will one day to his cost be convinc'd of its frailty, when both he and it shall perish together; but Jesus remaineth for ever. And as he is not liable to accidents himself, so neither will he suffer any to perish, who depend upon *him*. Let *him* alone then be your hope, your joy, your love, whose friendship and whose power are everlasting. Tho' you should be forsaken of all, yet will *he* stand by you; nay, all things else will certainly forsake you, but even then *he* will be all, and more than all the world to you.

In life and death then, keep close and steadfast to *him*, for he in life and death will be to your advantage. But then his friendship and constant protection depends upon this condition, that you
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admit no rival into competition with him. He will not accept divided affections, but expects to reign supreme and sole LORD of your hearts; and the only way to induce him to reside with you, is to cast out all other inmates, and let him have your whole heart to himself. And indeed, when we come to consider and make a just estimate of things, whatever love or regard we have had to any thing but him, we shall find we have bestowed to no purpose. Indulge not therefore a passion, which can turn to no account. Lean not upon a broken reed, which will not only let thee fall, but pierce thee through. And such a reed is mortal man, *For all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof flourisheth as a flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth;* 1 Pet. 1. 24. And they who are enamoured with its beauty, find at last how poor and transitory, how empty and deceitful a good they have set their hearts upon. Where-ever else, except in the love of Christ, we expect comfort, our hopes will be miserably blasted, or wretchedly disappointed; but when our thoughts and wishes center in Jesus, we shall be sure to find what we look for, sure to obtain all that we did, and more than we could expect. Think not to find satisfaction in thyself; for the better you are acquainted with yourself, the less cause you will find to love yourself; and the more you indulge this self-love, the greater and more certain will be your ruin. Seek then thy Lord and only Saviour; for he who hath Christ, possesses all things; and he who neglects him, hurts himself more than all the enemies, nay, than all this world, and all the powers of hell could possibly hurt him.



*At Gethsemane Jesus requests his Disciples
to sit down, while he went a little farther to pray.
Math. 26. 36.*



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R E F L E X I O N.

WHEN once a man is assured of his interest in the love of Christ, and experiences the sensible effects of it in his own soul, how tasteless, how joyless are all the pleasures and gratifications which this world can promise him! He lives as it were in heaven, and has a sweet foretast of that ecstatick bliss, which the saints and angels do, and for ever will enjoy in the immediate presence of the blessed Jesus in the immortal mansions above.

He that duly considers what Christ has done for him, must be the most ungrateful wretch that ever own'd a rational Being, if he can despise and undervalue such love. He set no price on his own life, but willingly suffer'd an ignominious death, to shew the transcendant love he had for us. And can we be insensible of so much affection? Does his deep concern for our eternal welfare demand no returns of love and duty to him? Why did he shew this infinite condescension towards man, but to manifest how desirous he was of opening an intercourse and correspondence with him? And is it possible that we should not be pleased with such divine complacency? If a man in a low circumstance of life is honoured with the presence of some great personage in his humble cottage, will he refuse the honour, and turn his great and generous patron out of doors? Surely no. He will rather study in what manner he shall entertain him suitable to his rank and dignity. Does Jesus invite himself to be thy guest, and canst thou put such an affront upon him, as to shut the door of thy heart against him? Does he desire to converse familiarly with thee, and wilt thou scornfully turn thy back upon him?

O love Jesus above all things; and indeed if thou lovest any thing above him, thou lovest him not at all. Thou canst not divide thy affections between him and the world. He has all the charms that can make him desirable, all the perfections that can make thee happy; whatever really deserves thy esteem, thou wilt soon see in him, if thou wilt but carefully peruse the picture which is drawn of him in the volume of his holy word.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Intimacy, and Friendship with JESUS.

WHILE JESUS is present with me by his grace and comfort, nothing is hard to do, nothing grievous to suffer; but happiness and perfect peace dwell and reign in my breast; but the moment he absents himself, all my supports fail me, all my faculties are disabled, and every difficulty is insuperable, and every cross insupportable. The consolations of this world affect me not, nor give me any solid joy, while he continues silent; but let him speak one single word of comfort to my soul, and she is gay in the midst of distresses. Thus Mary rose immediately, and wiped away her tears, when she heard that Christ her dear Master was coming. And happy sure she was, and happy is every mortal in this vale of tears, whom Jesus calls; for whom he calls and commands to come to him, he calls from grief and mourning to true solid joy. How flat and tasteless, how harsh and disagreeable is all we are, and all we have, without this heavenly

venly Comforter! how empty and deceitful all those wishes and desires, which are placed upon any other object! Their proffer'd gain is infinitely to our loss; a loss greater and more irrecoverable, than if we lost the whole world. For could we gain the whole world with the loss of him, it were a foolish and most woeful exchange. And what indeed is all the world without him? To be deprived of this one friend, is more bitter than death; to enjoy and possess him, the only happiness of life. His friendship is a sufficient security against a whole world of enemies; a treasure more valuable than all the riches of the universe. He who finds this, hath more than both the *Indies*; and he who loses it, loses more than can be express'd. But what do I talk of more! he loses all. For, to lose the only true riches, is poverty indeed; poverty in the worst sense.

So all-sufficient, so delightful, so heavenly sweet is the company of Jesus! But every man is not qualified to receive so precious, so invaluable a blessing; for it requires the utmost care, and skill, and wisdom, to be fit for so high an enjoyment. Humility and charity must make and keep him ours; piety and peace are the dispositions he is pleas'd with. Sin, and passion, and earthly mindedness, will drive him away. And if he leaves thee, where, wretched man, where wilt thou find a friend? Without a friend thou canst not live in comfort; and if he be not thy only friend, thou art indeed desolate and forlorn. O consider then, how miserable thou makest thyself, by fixing thy confidence, or placing thy joy, in any other. For better were it, that that the whole world should bend their utmost malice against thee, than this one friend be provok'd against thee. If therefore

relations and acquaintance are dear, yet beware that none be so in comparison with thy God and Saviour. Remember, they are dear for *his* sake, but he for his own; for this is the peculiar prerogative of Christ, that enemies as well as friends must both have a share in thy affections for his sake. Thou must forgive and love, pity and pray for all mankind, because *he* loves them all; and it should be the earnest desire of our souls, that all may know, and be sensible of his love, and make some suitable returns for such wonderful goodness. But neither we nor any other person, have a right to be loved for the sake of our own selves; for the foundation of love is excellence and goodness; and this is all from God. In him alone it dwells originally, inherently, independently; and what proportion soever of excellence any creature hath, it is entirely derived from him, the emanation of that universal and inexhaustible source. And therefore none but he has a right to command our love for his own excellence, because all excellence is *his*; none but he is to be loved above all others, because he neither hath, nor can have any equal. Be not ambitious then of the praise or love of men, for praise and love belong peculiarly to God; nor lavishly bestow these on others, but in thyself, and in all persons of virtue and merit, laud, and admire, and love the graces of Christ.

Bring then to thy LORD a clean and upright heart, free from the sordid affections of the world; that thou may'st be entirely his, and delight thyself with the pleasures of his conversation; but thou canst not leave the world, and come to him, with-

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out the prevention and assistance of his grace. This only can exalt thy desires, and draw and charm thy heart with the beauties of divine love. For man can *do all things through Christ, that strengthens him*; Phil. iv. but if that assistance be withdrawn, he is blind and naked, destitute and helpless, full of confusion and torment; or rather, he is all confusion, he is weakness and impotence itself. And if sometime thou feel an inward scourge, let not thy melancholy thoughts deject or drive thee to despair; for spiritual joys and comforts are sown in tears; and patience brings forth plentiful and perfect fruits of righteousness and peace. If these sorrows proceed from a consideration of thy own sins and infirmities, indulge the holy grief, and lament, as becomes a serious penitent, thy own unworthiness, and former misery. If adversities, inflicted by the hand of providence, afflict thee, support thyself with the consolations of a good conscience; and be assured, that suffering, if it advances thy Master's honour, will end in glory and advantage to thyself. But consider, that, in either case, the trouble cannot be long; for these gloomy intervals of sadness will as certainly, as naturally, be followed with inward peace and joy, as summer succeeds winter, and storms are hushed into a profound calm.

REFLEXION.

IF *Jesus* is thine, thou hast more than all the world can give thee; if he is pleased to communicate himself to thee in the sweet influences of his Holy Spirit, thou wilt have no relish for all the joys and gratifications of sense; if he is thy friend, thou needest not fear the greatest adversity

lary upon earth. From him thou wilt receive such comforts and consolations as the men of the world are absolute strangers to.

By the strength and power which thou receivest from a close intimacy and converse with the blessed Jesus, thou art enabled to conquer the greatest difficulties, to support the heaviest afflictions, to labour through the cares, vexations, and disappointments of this life, with ease and satisfaction, and to look death in the face without terror or surprise.

When Christ reveals himself, in all his lovely perfections to our souls, how despicable in our eyes are all the riches and grandeur of the Great! Ambition loses its wings, covetousness has no longer a temptation, pride sinks into humility, voluptuousness is changed from a carnal and sensual into a divine delight, and the pleasures and gayeties of this world are metamorphos'd into a spiritual entertainment, where Jesus himself is the Master of the feast, and the chief guest at table; here the thirsty and hungry soul satisfies its most craving appetite with all the delicacies that heaven itself can provide, and such as are exactly suited to the nature of its being.

But how, will the pious soul say, shall I attain to this high felicity? Will the ever-blessed Jesus deign to visit such a poor sinful wretch as I am; or condescend to make such a polluted habitation as mine the place of his residence? Yes; for he delights to dwell with the man of an humble and contrite spirit. There only wants thy willingness to receive him into thy heart; for he is always ready, upon the first call, to enter. Let the mansion be prepared fit for the reception of this heavenly visitor, and thou wilt soon see him approach, cloathed

cloathed with love, attended with the graces of mercy and good will, affability in his countenance, and offering thee everlasting crowns and garlands that shall never fade, with his right hand ; and with his left stretched out for thy support and assistance, to carry thee through this vale of tears, till thou shalt arrive safe at those mansions of bliss, which are immortal and eternal, where thou shalt enjoy his beatifying presence, worlds without end.

CHAP. IX.

The disconsolate State.

WHEN all human comforts fail us, if God is pleased to supply their place with spiritual and heavenly, which are infinitely better ; we are not much to wonder, if the soul preserve its temper, and bear up manfully under such circumstances. But when the world and God both frown upon us, then to bear such desertion with patience, and be content to be abandoned of all our hopes for his glory ; then to confess our unworthiness, and not charge God foolishly, nor partially acquit ourselves ; this is truly virtue and resignation, the very excellence and perfection of an humble and submissive mind. Who that seriously considers, can forbear rejoicing, while the chearful light of God's countenance shines bright about him ? Who can be so wretchedly foolish as to think much of his service, when bounty and blessings reward his pains, and convince him that he does not serve God for nought ? This is the happy season, which every
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man desires and triumphs in. Smooth and pleasant is the passage of that man, whom the grace of God conducts and carries through this troublesome world. Nor can we think it strange, that he should not feel the weight of his burthen, who is strengthen'd and supported by Almighty power, and led through difficulties and dangers by the Captain of his salvation?

It is natural for us to lay fast hold of any thing that may give us ease; and it is hard for a man to divest himself of carnal affections; so that, before our passions be effectually subdued, and our delight and hope fix'd entirely upon God, we must undergo many and frequent conflicts; and yet without this our peace and quiet is not to be purchased. For so long as a man trusts in his own strength, he is easily turn'd aside to worldly comforts, and tastes little satisfaction but what arises from such. But he whose soul is filled with God and goodness, takes no delight in sensual enjoyments, but finds a pleasure in the severer exercises of virtue and devotion, and has even delight in the difficulties he undergoes for Christ's sake.

If then God shed down spiritual comforts from above, entertain the precious gifts with humility and thanks; and do not lose the effect and reward of grace, by imagining it is your due, or valuing your self upon it. Rejoice in the blessing; but take care to receive it with gratitude; let it not make thee insolent and vain, or swell thee into censoriousness or contempt of thy weaker brethren; but the more thou hast received, the greater let thy modesty be; and the more thy fear, thy diligence and watchfulness, that thou abuse not such gracious liberality. For comfort and gladness will not last always; a cloud will throw its shade, and
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interrupt the chearful beams of the Sun of righteousness. Temptations will certainly attack thee; and therefore, when these fall hard and heavy, let patience and humility, not hopeless despondency, be the happy effect of such oppressions. The sharpness of thy sufferings must increase thy trust, inflame thy zeal and devotions; and fervent prayer is the proper weapon against the attacks of our spiritual adversary. For thou must not think that matters are desperate; he who took away his supports, withdraws them only for a season, and to those who seek them with holy perseverance, will at a proper (that is, at his own) time, restore them again with advantage. This is an usual thing with God. The Prophets and Saints of old have all obtained their crowns, by the same rough way of grief and desertion. Nor must we imagine, that these disconsolate and gloomy intervals are the effects of God's anger and final rejection of us.

Observe how eminent an instance of these changes we have in David, *the man after God's own heart*. When the grace and favour of God was lifted up upon him, his mind was exalted proportionably: *In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be cast down, thou, Lord, of thy goodness, hast made my hill so strong*, Ps. xxx. 6. But when this favour was withdrawn, he acknowledges the consequence of it, namely, the deep and heavy impression it made upon his spirits, *Thou didst turn thy face from me, and I was troubled*, verse 7. But yet this trouble, though exceeding sharp and severe, did not sink him into despair. His remedy was prayer, *Then cried I unto thee, O Lord, and got me to my Lord, right humbly*, verse 8. And how successful this application proved, himself declares, *The Lord heard me, and had mercy upon me; thou hast turned*

my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sack-cloth, and girded me with gladness, Psal. xxx. 10, 11. Now, if these sorrows were the portion of those bright patterns of piety; if God's dearly beloved children and most faithful servants, have not always enjoy'd his propitious smiles; if men of so exalted virtue were yet differently affected by the different dispensations of providence toward them; what are we poor, weak, worthless wretches, that we should expect to be exempted from troubles? What is our zeal in comparison of theirs, that we should hope to have it always fervent, always lively? What have we done to confine the kindly influences of that Spirit, and secure them always to ourselves, which even to those that use and improve it best, *goes and comes, and blows only where and when it listeth?* John iii. 8. And therefore *Job* takes notice of it, as what is common to all mankind, that God does not so magnify, or set his heart upon any one among them, but that *he visits him every morning, and tries him every moment,* Job vii. 17, 18.

In what then can we safely confide, except in the grace and mercy of God only? All other comforters are miserable. The converse and exhortation of religious men, the tender and affectionate advice of dear and faithful friends, the entertainment of good looks, the moving strains of pious eloquence, the heavenly raptures and of psalms and hymns, all these yield but very poor and slender relief, to abate the anguish of our minds, or but so much as to divert and to deceive our pain; if God withdraw his consolations, and leave us to the desolate and melancholly condition of merely human helps. Then, as our last and best refuge, let us fly to God; humble ourselves under his mighty hand; patiently
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bear, what he lays upon us; confess his goodness even in our sufferings; and be content to suffer still, so long as he sees fit; for be assured, he will not continue his displeasure for ever, but will in due time revive the contrite, and exalt the humble.

I never did, to the best of my remembrance, meet with any remarkably good man, who had not, at sometime or other, fallen into these discomforts, and languished under the apprehension of God's displeasure, or the abatement and lukewarmness of his own zeal. Nor was it ever designed, that any man in this life should attain to so exalted a state of holiness, and absolute safety, as not to be sometimes tempted; which however happens at very different times; for some have their trials in the beginning of their conversion, which are reserved for others, till they come to greater degrees of strength and perfection. It seems, the sublime and rapturous contemplations of God are a blessing too precious for those, who have not first endured some trouble of mind, to qualify them for so excellent a reward. Well then may we rejoice in these temptations, which are ordained certain forerunners of more abundant grace, and undoubted signs of those unspeakable consolations and delights, which are reserved for them who have approved themselves faithful. For not to him who engages not in the fight, but *to him that overcometh* by striving courageously, and endureth to the end, *will I give to eat of the tree of life*, Rev. ii. 7.

Most wisely therefore are these vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity appointed for the improvement of our piety and virtue. Were our troubles without interruption, no flesh could be saved; and therefore God softens and rewards them with inward and heavenly comforts, that so, by the assistance of

his grace, and encouraged by his favour, we may be able to sustain the most severe and sharpest trials. But, were that grace and favour without intermission too, we should be immoderately exalted with our performances, and impute the blessings of God to our own merit. And therefore the returns of affliction, and spiritual desertion, are very proper, to prevent or check our pride. They convince us, that how much soever we may value ourselves, yet we are not so perfect, but that we deserve to suffer; and that the good which we receive, we receive it not as due to us, but of liberality and free grace. Think not, that the devil ever sleeps; he is always watching for an opportunity to assault, and work thee mischief. The flesh is not quite mortified, nor its appetites and passions so much in subjection, but that every fresh object will awaken them into lust. Be thou therefore awake too, and be always ready for some new conflict: Speak not peace to thyself, when beset on every side with numerous and restless enemies; for sad indeed is thy case, if their violence be suffered to bear thee down, or their subtle and wakeful malice surprize thee into sin.

R E F L E X I O N .

IT is very possible, that a man, from his own reasoning and philosophical meditations, may be able to support the common evils of this life with a tolerable grace; he will more easily and chearfully bear them if he is blessed with the sacred influences and divine comforts of the Holy Spirit: But that man who wants the supports of philosophy, and at the same time apprehends himself under the displeasure of his Maker, and yet hopes
even

even against hope, and is firmly persuaded, that the Almighty deserts him only for a time, to answer some great purpose of his providence; if we mark the end of that man, we shall find it conclude in peace and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

God may afflict us with the loss of some intimate friend, or dear relation, in whom we took great delight, and promis'd ourselves abundance of future happiness: What then? must we utterly despond, as if heaven had nothing in reserve to make us an equivalent for such a loss? Remember we the case of good old *Jacob*; *Joseph is not, and Simon is not*, says the disconsolate desponding Patriarch, *and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me*. But what was the consequence? Why, by the very means which *Jacob* thought he was about to be reduc'd to the extremest misery, God was working out for him the greatest happiness he desired in this life, namely, the sight of *Joseph*, and the high station to which he was advanced.

Remember also the case of holy *David*, who was often under a spiritual desertion, yet never suffer'd his faith to let go its hold in the promises and faithfulness of God; and of *Job*, who, tho' he had an uncommon measure of afflictions dealt to him, yet abates nothing of his confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, bears all with an inimitable patience, and with a resolution becoming that confidence, cries out, *Tho' he kill me, yet will I trust in him*.

Tribulation and affliction are the usual means by which God takes off our affections from the things of this world, purges us from the corruptions of sense, and brings us near to himself. Who then, that has any esteem for the love and favour of God,
that

that has any regard for the peace, comfort, and welfare of his own soul, will think much to bear some troubles and afflictions, which are but transitory, and of short continuance, when he considers, with the Apostle, that *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

CHAP. X.

Be thankful for God's Mercies.

MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; Job v. 7. and would'st thou be exempted from the common condition of nature, by hoping to be excused from labour and suffering? Consider this, and apply thyself vigorously to patience, as a most necessary virtue; and learn to bear the cross, as being allotted thee by thy Creator. For this will much better become a sinful creature, than to depend upon comforts, which thou deservest not, and delights which thou hast no right unto. Could even the worldly-minded be secure of spiritual joys without interruption, he could not, even upon his own principle, but be passionately fond of them, as affording more substantial satisfaction, than all eternal and sensual delight. For what comparison can there be between those pleasures, which are accompanied with shame, or deceit; and those which are solid and durable, void of reproach and indecency, the fruits of virtue, and the special gift of God to pure and heavenly souls? This then were *Epicurism* indeed, were this to be

attained and preserved by any the most assiduous and diligent care of ours. But that which renders even these joys less sensible, and less eagerly desired, is, that they are the free gift of God, who both gives and withdraws them as himself sees fit, and frequently suspends the happiness they bring, by long and severe trials. For we are in a state of continual discipline and warfare, and we must expect that our conflicts will return very thick upon us, so long as we remain in such a state.

Nor do these difficulties proceed from the malice of our enemies only, but we ourselves contribute to our own misery, and obstruct the more liberal communications of divine grace and comfort, by assuming a mistaken freedom, and extravagant conceits of our own strength and goodness. The bounty of God is wonderful, who supports us with the secret consolations of his Spirit; but the folly of man is unaccountable, who does not discern, and thankfully acknowledge, that all his ability to do well is given him by a higher power. If then the gifts of heaven are distributed to us more sparingly than we wish or expect, we make them still less, by not being duly qualified to receive them: And qualify'd we cannot be, while ungrateful to the Author of them, and negligent to improve all we receive to the praise and honour of the Giver. For he who hath and makes a good use of grace, does by that very act incline God to give more. And from the proud unthankful neglecters of the favour, even what they had is taken away, and added to the portion of the humble and diligent; those who are duly sensible, from whom, and to what purposes, it is given them.

I would not chuse that consolation that taketh from me compunction for my sins, nor would I have

have my spiritual comforts, at the expence of my humility. No, let me always be possessed of a penitent and contrite spirit, and may I ever so be the favourite of heaven, as never to forget that I am chief of sinners. Knowledge in the sublime and glorious mysteries of the christian faith, and ravishing contemplations of God and a future state, are most desirable advantages; but I would still prefer *charity which edifieth*, before the highest intellectual perfections of that *knowledge which puffeth up*, 1 Cor. viii. 1. For every thing which is high, is not therefore holy. Many meats are agreeable to the palate, which are not conducive to health; and those gifts, which we chiefly esteem, do not always recommend us most to God. Those spiritual advantages are certainly best for us, which increase our modesty, and awaken our caution, and dispose us, to suspect, and deny ourselves. And therefore it is an argument of wisdom in God, to recal his gifts sometimes, as well as an evidence of his goodness, to bestow them at others; that by the loss of what we had, we may experimentally find our own impotence and frailty, confess and be sensible of our wants; and know to whom the whole glory of all that is excellent in us, does most justly belong. *Render therefore to God the things that are God's*, and take to thyself what is properly thy own: To him give the thanks that are due for his graces, nay, for the very power of using them aright; and take to thyself the shame and condemnation of having used them no better: And know, that to him only belongs the honour for all that thou hast done well; and to thee only the blame and just punishment for all thou hast done amiss.

Sit down in the lowest place, and then shalt thou with honour be preferred to the highest;

Luke

Luke xiv. for the loftier the building, the deeper must the foundation be laid. The highest in God's esteem are meanest in their own; and their excellence consists in the meekness and truth, not in the pomp admir'd of men. To repose our hope and confidence in God alone, is the most effectual way to prevent our vanity and insolence; and the ascribing to him all our virtues and attainments, is inconsistent with coveting the praise of men. For the main concern of such persons is, to have their actions approved by God only; they labour to advance his glory, as the chief and only thing, which ought to be magnified or valued in all that is pious and commendable, in themselves and every good man.

Receive then a little with due sense of gratitude, thus thou shalt obtain more. The gifts, which others esteem most trifling and contemptible, consider thou as the gifts of God, and let this raise their value in thy esteem. For indeed every thing ought to be esteemed, which is a mark of his favour, who is the supreme Lord of all. Even stripes and punishments from *his* hand should be, not only patiently submitted to, but be thankfully received; since his rod is intended for our good, and every dispensation of his providence has some profitable and wise design. If then thou hast any value for the grace of God, and desire to keep it, be thankful when he gives it; be resigned and patient when he takes it away; pray fervently and frequently for the returns of his favour, and let not thy own pride or carelessness provoke him to withdraw it.

R E F L E X I O N.

No man can be in love with affliction ; on the contrary, 'tis natural to fly from it, and to embrace comfort and consolation, in whatever shape it appears to us. But since we are liable, by the unalterable laws of nature, to troubles and vexations, yet, even these, if put to a right use, are productive of much good and spiritual advantage to our soul ; *Do we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?* Job ii. 8. In every circumstance of life, how afflictive and severe soever it may be, we may still find something to exercise our gratitude and thankfulness to God.

But the man who is blessed with the inward consolations of the Holy Spirit, has the greatest reason for praise and thankfulness ; for he has that which makes abundant amends for the loss and failure of all worldly satisfactions and sensual pleasures. The gifts of divine grace are surely preferable to the gifts of fortune ; nay, there can be no comparison betwixt them, any more than there is betwixt the joys of heaven, and the short-liv'd transitory delights of the fool's paradise.

But yet we are to observe a due mean in our spiritual comforts ; when we are favour'd with the smiles of our beneficent Creator, we are not to forget that we are his creatures ; we are to remember that all his benefits to us are of his pure grace and favour ; that we have merited nothing at his hands ; and therefore, instead of being exalted above measure, it should minister an occasion for our humiliation ; we should confess our own unworthiness, and the little reason we had to expect or hope that the great God of heaven and
earth

earth would ever condescend to communicate himself in so friendly a manner to such wretched, sinful, and polluted creatures as we are.

And has our gracious God been thus bountiful to us? Has he given us any measures or degrees of his grace? And can we be guilty of so much baseness and ingratitude, as to reject the tender offers of his love? Or shall we not rather exert all the powers and faculties of our souls and bodies, in endeavours, to make some suitable returns for the wonderful condescending goodness and affectionate concern that he has manifested for our eternal welfare? Let us then thankfully receive every portion of his grace, and improve it to the amendment of our lives, if we expect that the grace which he has bestowed upon us, should not be in vain.

CHAP. XI.

Few love the Cross of Christ.

MANY we find who are mightily desirous of Christ's heavenly kingdom, and eager of reigning with him there; but how few are in love with his cross, and content to suffer with him upon earth? The graces and sweet consolations of his Spirit charm and draw us, but afflictions drive us away from him. When he invites men to sit down at his table, how thick and fast do the guests come crowding in! but if he calls us after him into the wilderness, to fast and pray with him, he calls in vain, and goes alone. The breaking of bread is agreeable enough to us, but we have no inclination

to drink of his bitter cup. We read the history of his life, and peruse his miracles with reverence and delight, for these were full of mercy and relief to wretched men; but when we read the tragical relation of his dolorous passion, and bitter death, we either shut our books, or read the melancholy story with coldness and unconcern. We can scarce persuade ourselves, that in *this part he hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps*, 1 Pet. ii. 21. Such was the behaviour, not of the multitudes only, but of his own disciples too heretofore, who join'd in his Hosanna's, and were overjoy'd at his preaching; but when he was apprehended, and treated as a malefactor, all *forsook him and fled*, Matt. xxi. John xviii. And such is still the behaviour of all those Christians who serve him chearfully, while things go well with them, and bless and magnify his mercy, so long as they taste his goodness; but shrink at the approach of afflictions, and if he hide the chearful brightness of his face, fall into wretched dejections and despondency of mind, and are provoked to impatience and murmuring, and sad complaints.

Methinks we might find many and powerful charms and engagements, which should unite our souls and affections to the blessed *Jesus*, from what he is in himself, not from what he is to us; without considering our private interest, and the present advantages we receive from him. This would confirm and root us fast in love, and praise, and gratitude; this would put it out of the power of outward calamities, or inward anxieties of mind, to shake or divert us. Then should we, with those holy men, even think it good, and thank God that we have been in trouble, and resolve that though he *should slay us*, yet would we still delight and

trust

trust in him. O! Could we but once conquer this mercenary disposition in us of proposing interest and gain in all we do, and love our Blessed Lord for his own sake, how noble would be the fruits of so generous a principle? And indeed, how can we say we love him, when we only love ourselves; and pay obedience to his commands, not out of regard to *his* authority and *our* obligations, nor from a desire to please him, but purely with a view to our own advantage? For where, among the many millions who profess to be zealous Christians, where is the man that would be content to serve God, as his Maker and rightful Lord, in case he had no expectation of reward from him? Nay, where shall we find one so spiritual, so refined; and of that poverty of spirit recommended and blessed by our Saviour, namely, to be resign'd as to all temporal enjoyments, and well satisfied to persevere in his duty, and not to think his Master hard, though he should even strip him bare of all those comforts, which are usually the encouragements of piety and virtue? This is a temper rarely to be met with; it is such a generosity and greatness of spirit, as crowns and kingdoms, nay, the whole world would be wisely given in exchange for. For this is the very perfection of love; a virtue so exalted, that no other part of religion is comparable with it. A man may bestow all his wealth upon the poor, and be never the better. He may chastise and mortify his flesh and sensual appetite, with all the severities of the most exemplary penitence, and yet this is, comparatively, but a trifling excellence. He may attain to the highest and clearest knowledge in the mysteries of religion; but still comes infinitely short of the main point. His virtues may be bright and exemplary,

plary, his devotion fervent and constant, his meditations ravishing and divine : All these are valuable gifts ; but yet there is one excellence behind, more valuable, more necessary than all the rest ; namely, the being able, after having renounced all the world besides, to renounce himself for the sake of his dear Redeemer ; to devote all he is or can do, so entirely to his service, as to be content with every thing ; to study his will, his pleasure, his glory in all things, and to consult his own in nothing : And when he hath faithfully and diligently perform'd all, which he knew to be his duty, and what was expected from him, then to esteem all this of no consideration, and account all that he hath done as nothing.

Others, no doubt, will have quite different sentiments of him. They will see and admire, proclaim and extol his virtues, but still their commendations, tho' never so profuse, never so just, will not have any influence upon his judgment ; nor tempt him to swerve in the least from that opinion, which truth itself hath directed us to in this case, *When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants*, Luke xvii. He will not think that complaint of the Prophet too mean for him, *I am poor and desolate*, Ps. xxv. when yet in truth there is not among mortal men any more wealthy, any more happy, greater, and more powerful than he, who in a true christian humility, thinks himself most helpless, most infirm, most miserable. In a word, none is accounted more honourable in God's eyes, than he who is vilest and most despicable in his own.

R E F L E X I O N.

WERE the joys of heaven attainable without any trouble, toil, or difficulty on our parts, what numbers should we see putting in their claim for this high prize? But God has wisely order'd it, that affliction should be the touchstone of our sincerity; that by a long course of temptations and tribulations, he may prove our trust and faith in him, that he may try whether our graces be of the right kind; that by the fiery trial he may purge us from the dross of our corrupt affections and sensual appetites. This he does to convince us of the invaluable worth of immortal things; for that which requires but little difficulty to obtain, is but little set by; but that which costs labour and pains, and abundance of sweat and toil, we have in the highest esteem.

The way to heaven is a thorny and rugged road; and he who expects to enjoy the crown of life, must be content to bear the cross, which is the necessary condition of that glorious and immortal reward. *Jesus Christ*, in his person, is lovely and amiable, his precepts reasonable and easy, his doctrines sound and salutary, and all his ways are pleasant, and his paths peace; all this is evident to a demonstration to a believing soul; but tho' he is thus fully persuaded of the excellency of every thing that belongs to Christ, he knows at the same time that his strict adherence to, and profession of these principles, will be attended with trials and troubles very severe to the flesh, and may probably cost him the loss of his estate, his dearest friends, and all that is valuable in the world's esteem; yet he can say, with the
Apostle,

Apostle, *None of those things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, Acts xx. 24.*

The Blessed Jesus hath set us a pattern worthy of imitation. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, *who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, Heb. xii. 2.* Thus should every one who professes the Name of *Jesus*, take up his cross and follow him; we must love him for his own sake; we must not flinch from his service whatever inconveniencies shall attend it; we must maintain the excellency of his laws against all opposition, and sacrifice every thing that is dear to us, that stands in the way of his honour, or that would obstruct his glory in the free course of the Gospel; let us but persevere in well-doing, and whatever troubles or difficulties we meet with in the way of our duty, shall be gloriously rewarded by our righteous Judge, at the last day.

CHAP. XII.

The Reasonableness of bearing our Cross.

WHEN *Jesus* thus describes the condition of our being owned for his, *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me; Matt. xvi.* most men are apt to cry out with those in the Gospel upon another occasion, *This is a hard saying, and who*

who can bear it? John vi. But oh! that such would seriously reflect, how infinitely more dreadful and confounding that sentence will be, which their angry Judge shall pronounce in thunder at the last day; and how those ears, which now are too delicate and tender to bear this, will then be able to endure a *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. What abundant reason have we then, not to harden ourselves at present, but chearfully embrace a command, which, tho' accompanied with some short uneasiness now, should yet be welcome to us, because it will give us boldness in the great day of trial; and, by laying upon us some short troubles, and very tolerable burdens, be our security against torments insupportable and eternal? For when our Lord shall come to judge the world with dreadful and tremendous pomp, the Cross shall be displayed and highly exalted in heaven. The Cross, which is now so much loathed and abhorred, so full of shame, shall then be a Banner of Triumph; and they who have fought under it here, and followed the Crucified Captain of their salvation, in a life of humility and sufferings, shall then flock to it as their proper standard, and enter with their glorious Leader into his joy and kingdom.

Shall we then boggle at that Cross, which leads directly to a Crown? Shall we thus obstruct our own happiness, by refusing that which heals our spiritual infirmities, guards us against our worst enemies, fills us with heavenly comforts, brightens our virtues, and supports us with assured hopes of unconceivable and everlasting bliss? Bear in mind thy great Master and Example, who bore his Cross, and died upon it, that thou hereafter mightest not disdain to bear it for thine own advantage, since he

for thy sake hath borne it before thee. *For if we dye with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; 2. Tim. ii. but if we deny him, and are ashamed of this suffering for his sake, he will also deny and be ashamed of us, and shut us out of his glory; Mark vii.*

Consider that thy All depends upon suffering and dying well. This is the sum of thy duty, this the source of thy happiness. No other way hath God ordained of bringing us to himself, except that one of *dying daily; and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. Gal. v. 24.* In this all the dispensations of providence concur; for, what course soever you take, which way soever you turn, how prudently soever you contrive, the cross is sure to meet you every-where. This, if willingly embraced, will prove your safety and virtue, but is sure to be your portion, whether you will or will not. Bodily sickness and pain, disappointments and losses in your fortunes, anguish and perplexity of heart, discomfort and desertions from God, injuries and provocations from men, and which is worse than all, displeasure and discontent at yourself? one or more, or perhaps all of these, will by turns be continually exercising your patience; and so long as God sees fit to continue you in this state of mortality and discipline, 'tis in vain to hope you shall be exempted from them.

For God, in his great wisdom and goodness, gives us to tribulation; and damps, or withdraws our present comforts, that we may learn to love and esteem him and heaven the more, to acknowledge our dependance upon his bounty, be made sensible of our own impotence and frailty, and grow wiser and more humble by afflictions. By these we are taught

taught to understand and know the value of the sufferings of Christ, of which we should have but a very cold and imperfect notion, did not our own experience instruct us what it is to suffer. And the greater conformity to his image our trials work us up to, the clearer and more affecting sense we have of his infinite condescension. It is in vain to say, we will shun the cross, because we cannot run away from ourselves, nor cease to be men; since therefore we cannot avoid it, we must endeavour patiently to endure, and render that which would otherwise be our torment, an instrument of virtue here, and of glory hereafter.

This is undoubtedly in our power. For they who sustain their cross, shall likewise be sustained by it in return, and all their pains largely rewarded in their due time and place. But this life is not that time and place; and therefore we must be content to labour now, and expect our recompence hereafter. But if we bear with murmuring and grudging those sufferings, which necessarily we must bear, we do but gall our shoulders with the yoke, and render that an uneasy and unprofitable burden, which might be made to turn greatly to our account. If we cast off one burthen, we are immediately laden and oppressed by another; and instead of affliction, full of hope and humility, we shall heap upon ourselves that most intolerable of all burthens, guilt and despair.

Why should you fondly imagine that you alone should be excepted from the common lot of all mankind? Can you produce one single instance in the whole catalogue of glorified Saints, who passed this vale of tears without his portion of misery? Even *Jesus Christ* himself, our great LORD, tho' God as well as man, yet lived a life of trouble,

and none was ever so truly a *man of sorrows*, or so intimately *acquainted with grief*. Isa. liii. Himself hath told us, *That it behoved him thus to suffer, and to rise again the third day, and so to enter into his glory*. Luke xxiv.

And if it was necessary for Christ himself, to ascend to the throne of God by this thorny way, can we presume to hope for a smooth and easy passage thither? His whole life was little else but one continued cross, a chain of sufferings, drawn out to the length of so many years. And do we, who profess to follow the pattern he has set us, expect a life of softness and ease, and uninterrupted pleasure? No, no, fond man, thou must expect nothing but trouble. In this thou mayst be assured thou wilt never be disappointed. It is not only the condition of thy happiness as a Christian, but thy certain settlement and portion as a man. For mortality is beset on every side with crosses, and every moment exposed to suffering. And though these be both the punishment and remedy for sin, yet we must not imagine that they, who are most careful to preserve themselves from sinning, are therefore excused from their share of suffering. For it frequently happens that the best men undergo the severest trials; and the better they are, the more tender and painful sense they have of them. For the fervent love and desire of a better country, their last and eternal home, renders the present pilgrimage and banishment more tiresome and afflicting.

But yet we must not from hence argue that these calamities are any reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God; for as in his mercy he appoints the rod, so does he likewise furnish his servants with mighty consolations and supports, suitable to their circumstances. And they

they, who submit to the cross as becomes them, by sowing in tears shall reap large and glorious fruits. The burthen of their miseries is lightned, by casting their care and reposing their trust upon one who hath a tender care and affectionate concern for them. And the more the outward man is weaken'd and oppress'd, the greater strength and grace they feel in the inner man. Nay, such is their desire, such their satisfaction in being conformed to the image of Christ; that good men sometimes would not even so much as wish to be freed from those miseries, in which the thoughtless part of mankind are apt to fancy the very extremity of unhappiness to consist. For these better instructed souls have a more extensive prospect, and can lessen all their distresses by this consideration; that the more they endure, the purer and more refined they are from sin, and the more acceptable and dear they become to God. This consideration indeed is not the effect of mere human strength or wisdom, but the product of divine grace. This sometimes gains so absolute a conquest over natural inclinations, and exalts flesh and sense to so high a degree of resignation and perfection, that what, as men, we cannot but decline, and have violent aversions to, as Christians we contentedly embrace, and submissively acquiesce in.

When therefore we feel in ourselves, or observe in others a zeal so powerful, so strong, so noble, as not only to bear, but even to love and delight in the cross: When we conquer and bring into absolute subjection these bodies, and their appetites, by a long and painful course of rigorous and voluntary severities; when we industriously avoid honours, and wealth; when we contentedly bear injuries, and infamy; when we despise ourselves, and

and even take pleasure in being despised by others; when we meet the sharpest misfortunes with constancy and temper, and are so perfectly dead to the world, as no longer to desire even those enjoyments and advantages, which recommend and sweeten life to mankind; do not suppose that this is the work, or falls within the compass of man's ability; for they who depend upon their own natural powers, or their own most refined philosophy, can never rise so high, nor thus abstract their minds from matter and sense. No other principle, but that of holy trust and faith in God, is capable of such divine operations. This strength and this resolution is given us from heaven. No force less than Almighty can subdue the flesh, the world, and the devil under our feet; no other power can defeat and set us above the horrors and assaults of his malice and temptations, less than *his*, who upon the cross vainquish'd this old serpent, and by so doing, sanctified our cross to us too.

Summon then all thy powers of reason and religion; remember whom thou hast engaged to follow, and with all the resolute fidelity required by thy vows and thy duty, set thyself manfully to take up his cross, who submitted to die upon a cross for thy salvation. Prepare and dispose thy heart, that no affliction may over-bear thee by surprize; but, considering what infinite variety of troubles surround thee, and wait thee every-where, be careful that none have the advantage of finding thee unprovided: Were it possible to escape, we might then be allowed to contrive methods of declining our miseries; but since they cannot be shifted off, the only remedy we have left against them, is readiness to suffer. Consider, it is a cup given thee by thy LORD, and that he drank the very

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bitterest dreggs of it; consider it is he who presents it to thee; and that the reason of his giving it to thee is, that thou may'st be partaker of his sufferings, in order to be made a more worthy partaker of his glory. 'Tis true, he was strengthened in his agonies by an angel, sent from above, *Luke xxii.* nor shalt thou want supports proper for thy condition. But what these comforts are, or in what measures fit to be imparted, our LORD himself is the best judge, to whose wise disposal we must leave it. But all we have to do ourselves, is to secure an humble and patient disposition. And this we should the more easily accomplish, would we but follow the pattern our Jesus hath left, of *enduring the cross, and despising the shame for the glory set before him.* *Heb. xii.* And what can recommend our suffering, what confirm our patience more, than to consider, that *these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?* *1 Cor. iv.* That glory, in comparison of which they are not worthy so much as to be named. A glory so transcendant, that if all the tribulations incident to all mankind were heaped upon one single person; yet even so the recompence we shall receive, is infinitely above what such a suffering could pretend to deserve; and heaven would be cheap and wisely bought, even at this vast expence.

Esteem thyself then fully happy, since thou canst even enjoy thy sorrows, and find a sensible satisfaction in suffering for Christ; for this is in a manner to enjoy heaven upon earth. A happiness, which no man can ever arrive at, so long as adversities bring pain, and discontent, and sad oppressions of spirit; for the solicitude, and constant

stant labour to avoid calamities, will be sure to create thy perpetual disquiet.

Suffering and dying are not only necessary incumbrances of our being, but the best and most authentick instances of our virtue and obedience. It is the business and excellence of a Christian to do thus daily; and they, who seriously apply themselves to it, will soon find their affections raised, their strength increased, and their comfort and inward peace most agreeably advanced. St. Paul was wrapt up into the third heaven, yet did he not make this, but rather his afflictions the matter of his boast. 2 Cor. xii. And we learn from Christ himself wherein the uncommon privileges of this especial favourite consisted, when he says, *I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* Acts ix. Suppose then, you could be favoured with his extasies and revelations, yet even these, 'tis plain from his example, would not exempt you from trouble and sufferings; for the more you are loved, and the more ardently you love, and are desirous to please your Saviour, the greater proofs of this kind you must expect to give.

Consider those *Apostles*, who went away from their persecutors, *rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.* Act. v. And from thence learn to covet and esteem the honour and dignity of enduring pain and poverty, persecution and reproach. For this indeed is no mean preferment, but a favour reserved for those whom God is kindest to; did we but consider the gain it brings to ourselves, the glory that redounds to our Maker, the joy it occasions to saints and angels, and the benefit accruing to our brethren, who shall observe, and be encouraged by our steadfastness,

fastness, and patience, and holy perseverance. Nay, even the wicked and carnal will be moved by such examples. For there is so evident a congruity and decency, in submitting patiently to any adversities which it shall please God to lay upon us, that even they who have not the heart to imitate, yet cannot help applauding and admiring the example we set them.

If we would seriously weigh things in a just balance, we must think it very unreasonable to decline suffering for CHRIST, when it is so plainly seen, that we are well content to endure much sorer hardships for the world, than any which God thinks fit to call us unto. And shall humour, or passion, or temporal interest be suffered to prevail upon us more powerfully than our duty? Especially, when that duty manifestly promotes an infinitely better interest; and the more we are mortified to ourselves and the world, the nobler advances we make towards God and life eternal? These are refined privileges, for which no man is qualify'd, till he be first purified in the furnace of adversity; nor can the spiritual and divine graces dwell in a soul, till the dross of earth and sensual appetites be first purged away. Assure yourself, that suffering for, and in obedience to Christ, is not only a service agreeable to God, but really advantageous to yourself, and that which contributes most to the welfare of the soul, of any thing that can happen in the present state. And, would the prejudices which flesh and blood lie under, permit us to discern and consider matters impartially; this would be the first object of our wishes, and be preferred before all the outward prosperity, or inward satisfactions, this world can give. For who would not be ambitious of resembling our LORD, and his most eminent

Saints? It is not indisputably evident that the thing which render'd their merit so distinguishable, was not the larger degree of their revelations, or the pleasures they enjoy'd, but the number and extremity of their afflictions? And we may be assured, that if Christ had known any better way to heaven, than by crosses and patience, he would both have chosen it himself, and reserved it for his most faithful servants, and dearest friends. But, since his own example, and his constant directions declare, *That if any man will come to him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow him*, Luke xiv. it is but folly, and labour lost, to think of any other method. For there is no doubt to be made, but this will be the sum and conclusion of the whole matter, that, *through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.*

R E F L E X I O N.

WHOEVER seriously considers the advantages of the cross, will never think it too laborious a task, nor the weight of it too heavy, or burthensome, tho' he should be obliged to carry it through the whole journey of his life. For what are all the troubles and afflictions, the vexations and disappointments of this life, when put in ballance with the eternal weight of glory, which every faithful bearer of the cross shall receive as the reward of his patience and perseverance at the last day.

Let us consider the benefits of the cross in another light, namely, as it will exempt us from the wrath of God due to us for our sins, and free us from everlasting punishment, which is the necessary consequence thereof. Now, can any man, who believes there will be an Hereafter, and that the

Almighty

Almighty has certainly allotted a place of torment for all the workers of iniquity, and for such as have preferr'd the enjoyment of their own ease and carnal delights, to the difficulties of religion, and the hardships and hazards of a christian profession; can a man who is firmly persuaded of the truth of these things, hesitate a moment where he should fix his choice; whether he shall contentedly bear the cross of Christ, and patiently submit to the afflictive dispensations of providence, whereby he secures to himself an exemption and safety from eternal misery; or give himself a loose to all the pleasures and gratifications of sense, when he knows that the everlasting ruin of his immortal soul will be the certain consequence of his present pursuits?

At the last day, when all shall be summon'd before the great tribunal of heaven, then shall the cross be gloriously displayed, and all that ever have lifted themselves under that banner, shall resort to it. It will then be seen that such, as in this life, have been advanced to the very pinnacle of their ambition, and possess'd of all the wealth, pleasure, and grandeur, that their hearts could wish for, have plac'd their happiness on wrong objects, that earthly honours and possessions, if confided in as the utmost felicity of the soul, will, at that day, sink them to the lowest degrees of contempt and misery: But that those who were reckon'd the off-scouring of the world, the poor, the hungry, the blind, and the naked, who have often borne the insults of the rich and the great, shall, at that great day of retribution be advanced to crowns and kingdoms, shall be magnificently cloathed in robes of white; their former sufferings will be a heightening to their present splendor; the cross, which they

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have so patiently borne, instead of being their disgrace, shall be their everlasting glory; the scoffs and insults with which they were once treated by a wicked world, shall be turned into joyful acclamations and agreeable welcomes from an innumerable host of Saints and Angels; tho' here they were toss'd from one scene of misery to another, and had not a place to rest their heads, except perhaps in some dismal dungeon, shall then be admitted into everlasting mansions of bliss; *then shall God wash away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away,* Rev. xxi. 4. All sorrow, and all the causes of sorrow, shall be removed; they shall have no outward occasion, nor inward disposition to weep: There shall be no more death, but immortality and eternal life; nor any more pain nor sickness, but pleasure for evermore.

Lord! says one, what a sovereign cordial is this against all our present sorrows and sufferings! to consider the time is at hand when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, all sorrows, and the causes of sorrow, banish'd from our hearts, and everlasting joys shall possess our souls, and we shall be with our Lord for ever, to obey him with vigour, to praise him with chearfulness, to love him above measure, to fear him without torment, to serve him without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like unto him as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as immortality!

The End of the *Second Book.*

OF THE
IMITATION
OF
Jesus Christ.

The Third Book.

Dialogues between CHRIST and the
Soul of his Disciple.

CHAP. I.

The happiness of such a conversation.

(*Disciple.*)

I Will hear what the Lord GOD will say concerning me. Ps. lxxxv. 8. For blessed is the soul, which hears the LORD speaking, and experiences the transporting comforts of his gracious words. Blessed are those ears, which attentively listen to the soft and gentle whispers of his Spirit; but are obstinately deaf to the treacherous insinuations of this deluding world. And doubly blessed are they, who not only hear the sound of truth in the outward administrations of the world,

Word, but by the inward and familiar communications and motions of infused grace. Blessed are those eyes, which are shut to all sensual and worldly objects, and constantly wakeful and open to the great concerns of the soul, and turned inward upon one's self. Blessed are they whose sharper sight enters deep, and penetrates into the secret and sublime mysteries of heavenly truth; purged and prepared by spiritual meditations, and daily exercise of holy duties. Blessed indeed are they, who disengage themselves from all worldly impediments, and gain leisure and opportunities for attending continually upon God alone.

Consider this, my soul, and shake off sensual desires, which must be first renounced, before thou canst listen with due reverence and attention to those things, which the Lord will speak. And, O! what comfortable words are those, *I am thy peace, thy life, thy salvation, and exceeding great reward*, John xiv. Genes. xv. *Come unto me, thou that art weary and heavy laden, and thou shalt find rest unto thy soul*, Matt. xi. *Set thy affections on things above, and not on things on the earth*, Coloss. iii. *For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal*. 2 Cor. iv. What are sub-lunary things, but dangerous and empty delusions? And what could it profit a man to gain, although it were the whole world, if he be abandoned and cast off by his Creator? In him alone is pleasure, and bliss, and glory. Therefore pursue no longer those cheating shadows, but embrace the only substantial good; bid a final farewell to the deceits of the world, and place all thy love and endeavours upon thy God; for in his service and by his acceptance thou shalt attain the end of thy wishes, the fruit of thy labours, solid satisfaction and happiness.

R E.

R E F L E X I O N.

HAPPY is that soul with whom God vouchsafes to converse. He indeed is the favourite of heaven, whom the king of heaven honours with the intimacies of a familiar correspondence, in whose ear he whispers the secrets of his love, whose heart he replenishes with the fulness of his grace. How sweet is leisure and retirement to him, who, at such times, can be entertain'd with so heavenly a companion? Who would willingly have any commerce with a vain and wicked world, that can have an open traffick with this heavenly *Canaan*? Who would feed on husks with swine, that has once tasted the celestial delicacies of the upper world? Who can be pleased with vain and sensual delights, that has had but a foretaste of these divine pleasures which flow in pure and uncorrupted streams at God's right Hand?

Leave then, my soul, earthly things to earthly men; have no concerns with any thing that may interrupt the sweet intercourse betwixt God and thee; bid sense and all its corrupt affections and filthy appetites, stand at a distance, while thou art entertaining this divine Lover; say to the world, and all its pleasures and vanities, I have no room for you; I have pleasures that you know nothing of; I am now at a feast of which you cannot partake; I have a guest who is a stranger to you, and you to him; interrupt me not, for I am now in the very height of my delight.

Happy is that man, who is thus divinely employ'd; he scarce feels afflictions; the troubles and anxieties of life give him no pain; or if they do, it proceeds from that interruption they give to

to those extatick joys vouchsafed him in his spiritual interviews with the Blessed *Jefus*.

CHAP. II.

God alone speaks Comfort to the Soul.

(Disciple.)

Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. i Sam. iii. Behold, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid; O give me understanding, that I may learn thy Commandments. Ps. cxix. Incline my soul to the words of thy mouth, which drop down as the rain upon the tender herb, and distill gently, like dew upon the grass. Deut. xxxii. The Israelites indeed besought *Moses* heretofore, *Speak thou unto us, and we will hear, but let not God speak unto us, lest we die.* Exod. xx. 19. But let it not be so done unto me, my God. I rather chuse to make my humble petition, in the prophet *Samuel's* form; *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* O! let not *Moses*, let not any of the Prophets be my only instructor, but do thou my most gracious Father also vouchsafe to teach me by thyself; for thou art the source and the original of all their light and knowledge. Whatever truth they utter'd, was from thy inspiration and heavenly guidance; thou alone art essential wisdom and truth, and canst communicate thy self effectually to my soul.

Their words, alas! are little more than air and empty sound, but thine are spirit and life. Their expressions may be proper, their arguments convincing,

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*A Blessing pronounced on those
who give Drink to the Thirsty*
Matt. 25. 35.

vincing; but unless thou break silence, my soul will still continue deaf and insensible. They deliver the words, but thou art the divine Interpreter, and lettest me into the true and hidden sense of their abstruse oracles. Their books are sealed, and thou alone canst open and explain them. From them we receive the command, but only from thee is given us a disposition to obey, and the whole power of performing it. They point out the way, but thou impartest the strength to walk in it: All they can do, is still remote and without us. Thou only enterest into the soul, and by a secret conveyance, puttest truth in the inward parts. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water*; but except thou be pleased to give the increase, 1 Cor. iii. *the word will return unto thee void, and accomplish no part of the end, whereunto thou sentest it.* Isa. iv. The voice of their cries pierces our ears; but the knowledge of what they cry, and the impression made upon our hearts, is thy peculiar gift.

Therefore, I must again implore thy grace and mercy, and intreat, that *Moses* may not speak to me, but thou, my LORD, my GOD, the only and eternal truth, lest I die; not by the terrors of thy thundering voice, but by the gentle and effectual communications of thy will. For if I be taught and admonished by the outward ministration only, and be not inwardly disposed, and zealously affected to obedience, the advantages of instruction will but turn to my greater condemnation. For this is the dismal consequence of the Word *preached not profiting, when it was not mixed with faith in them that hear it.* Heb. iv. And mixed with faith thou well knowest it cannot be, unless seconded and enforced by the voice of thy Spirit; unless thou incline me to love the good I know, and enable me

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faithfully to fulfil the doctrine I believe. *Speak therefore, Lord, I say again; To thee thy servant listens gladly, for thou hast the words of eternal life.* John iv. Speak powerfully to my soul, and apply the saving truths home to my conscience and affections; that thy words may minister comfort and peace, reformation and holiness to thy willing and attentive servant, and to thy self immortal honour and praise.

R E F L E X I O N.

LORD! I confess myself a poor, frail, helpless creature, unable to fulfil the least of thy commandments without the special assistance of thy Holy Spirit. Thy word is good, and salutary to the soul, but still will it be a dead letter, useless and unprofitable, unless set home upon my heart by the impressions of divine grace. In vain didst thou inspire thy holy Prophets to instruct me, except I have the aids of thy Spirit to apply those instructions for my information, comfort, and advantage. In the Scriptures I read of the faith of *Abraham*, the meekness of *Moses*, the zeal of *David* for the honour of his God, the patience of an afflicted *Job*, the inflexible piety of the *three Children* in the fiery furnace, and many other eminent examples of holiness and exalted virtue, the history of whose lives and worthy deeds was writ, and left upon record for our imitation; but unless we have the same Spirit of piety, that was infused into them, unless, like them, we are enabled to live by faith, and not by sight and sense, the bright patterns they have left, and the noble exploits they were empower'd to atchieve, will prove to us no more than an idle amusement, a tale that is told, which may
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please us in the hearing, but is soon forgot. But if God is pleased to send us the aids of his Holy Spirit, every doctrine and instruction that we read in his word, will help to form in us a holy and heavenly disposition; every worthy, whose extraordinary sanctity made him the favourite of providence, will stir us up to a holy emulation of his virtues, and leave such an impression upon us, as nothing shall be able to efface, till we have done something worthy of the vocation whereunto we are called, and of him who hath redeemed us from sin, from death, and from everlasting destruction, by pacifying the wrath, and satisfying the justice of an angry God, by offering his own Life and most precious Blood a sacrifice upon the Cross.

CHAP. III.

*Of the Obedience due to God's Word.**(Christ.)*

SINCE then, my son, thou do'st so passionately desire to hear my voice, incline then thine ears to my words. Words, which well deserve, and will abundantly reward thy most diligent attention; for they are sweet and engaging, far exceeding all the charming arts of human eloquence; useful and instructive, beyond the most laboured systems of philosophy. The wisdom of this world could not invent, or order, nor can it comprehend them. The mysterious truths they declare, are too deep for human sense to fathom; nor canst thou penetrate into their secrets, till

guided by that light from whence they flow. My precepts are pure and spiritual, such as a carnal and impure heart can have no taste for. Every word of mine is of weight; and spoken, not to entertain the curious, and tickle itching ears, but to subdue the heart, and command a strict obedience. Hear therefore my son, but hear as becomes thee, with awful silence, and respectful submission; with profound and reverend humility; with an earnest desire to be taught; and sincere and vigorous resolutions of doing as thou art taught.

(*Disciple.*)

I own the mighty favour, and heartily acknowledge, with thy holy Prophet, That *blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in thy law; that thou mayest give him strength in time of adversity, lest he fall away with the ungodly.*

(*Christ.*)

Know thou that Prophet spoke what I inspired, as did all those holy men of old; for they were all of my sending. Nor is my care at all relaxed now, tho' the effects of it may not be so visible as then. For I, who taught them, continue teaching still; nay, I direct my speech to all, tho' all will not hear me. For there are many deaf to all my solicitations; and therefore deaf, because they stop their ears; *bate my instructions, and will none of my reproofs.* Prov. i. They much rather listen to the world, than to God, and are more inclined to obey their own corrupt and sensual, than his pure and heavenly will. The world court them with short and transitory, trifling and empty joys, and they greedily engage in its service; I covenant for eternal and heavenly rewards; and the thoughtless wretches

wretches will not consider, or think them worth their acceptance. And this folly is universal; for, who, among the children of men, expresses half that zeal and earnestness, that solicitous desire to please, and dutiful fear to offend, in his behaviour towards me, which he does in matters relating to this world, or in obedience to masters upon earth? Consider this, and blush for shame; for what, but shame and confusion of face, canst thou suppose should attend this unworthy usage, this most absurd folly?

A small preferment is esteemed a sufficient consideration for long and painful journies. Men pursue it eagerly, and endeavour all they can to get ground of their competitors; this is every one's care, and it is accounted a reproach to be negligent in such pursuits. But, when advancement to heaven and eternal happiness is offer'd, they are negligent and unactive, and scarce a man is to be found, who thinks it worth the while to mend his pace, or sets one step forward to meet, or to secure, so glorious an advantage. A little sordid gain engages all mens industry; a trifling sum embroils them in litigious and expensive suits, and they are content to drudge for things scarce worth their acceptance, and, depending on a frail promise, lose the ease of their days, and the sleep of their nights, and think their toil and anxious care well recompenced, if they can compass them at last: But a substantial and unchangeable good, a recompence greater than they knew how to value justly; immortal glory, and the honours of the Saints, are sunk so low in the esteem of wretched man, that the least pains and difficulties are thought too much for them to undergo.

And art thou not ashamed, lazy, insensible, and
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grumbling wretch, that the children of this world should pursue their death and eternal destruction, with a more vigorous industry and zeal, than thou canst find in thy heart to bestow upon life and happiness? shall toys and vanities engage their affections more than solid and true good can win upon thine? Nay, even those vanities, whose very enjoyments are empty, so frequently disappoint their expectations, and are never enjoyed at all: Their friends promise and deceive them; they labour, but cannot attain: But my promises are without repentance; none could ever tax me with breach of faith, or can complain that his dependance upon my word hath at any time disappointed him. For I require no return, but only love and perseverance; and, if these be not wanting, I answer to the full, nay, I far exceed the largest wishes and most longing expectations of my servants. Yet false and fickle men can easily persuade, but it seems, the God who cannot lye, calls and promises in vain! I am the sure rewarder of all that diligently seek me; and if such meet with sufferings and sharp temptations, these are not marks of my displeasure, but wisely ordered, and kindly intended, to prove the sincerity of my servants zeal, and to make their virtues shine the more illustrious.

Write then, my son, my words in thy heart; grave them in deep and lasting characters; ponder them attentively, for thou shalt find them a seasonable relief and firm support in the day of trial and adversity. What thy bare reading of my word hath not taught thee, affliction will interpret and make plain. For I do not always visit my chosen alike. Sometimes the comforts of my grace are proper, at other times the withdrawing those comforts, and bringing the patience and constancy of my

my children to the touch, by outward calamities, and inward anguish of spirit, is more for their advantage. Thus I daily train them up in goodness, and chastising and making them hate their sins, and cultivating and encouraging their advancement in virtue. By the one dispensation I engage their love to me, by the other their fondness for the world is abated. But lost and wretched indeed is that stupid creature, upon whom these methods make no impression; for *he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, bath one that judgeth him in the last day.* John xii. 46.

REFLEXION.

The voice of Christ, when it speaks to the heart, is more powerful and efficacious, than the most moving eloquence of the most renowned orators. Human eloquence may indeed move the passions, rouse our courage into extraordinary exploits, kindle anger into rage, melt a hard and uncharitable disposition into pity and compassion; nay, such is its power, that it will dress up vice in all the agreeable ornaments of virtue, so that it will require a very nice judgment to distinguish one from the other: But yet, whatever false glosses it may put upon things, it cannot alter the eternal nature of things; vice will still be vice, the abhorrence of God, and the detestation of good men; and virtue will still retain its intrinsic value and excellence, however rhetorically degraded and indignified. Thus the powers of eloquence may be employed to very bad purposes, and at most, the impressions it makes are not of long continuance, but wear off as fresh objects occur to divert the mind another way. But far different are the effects of Christ's

Christ's speaking to the soul ; he powerfully inclines us to obey his laws, by convincing us of their intrinsic excellence, and of our essential happiness in the obedience he requires of us ; he shews the odious nature of sin, and paints it in its proper colours ; he makes us feel the solid comforts of his grace ; he awakens us to a view of his divine perfections, and kindles in our hearts an unalienable love to his person, and an unextinguishable zeal for his glory ; he speaks pardon to our souls, resolves our doubts, cheers our drooping spirits, strengthens and fortifies us against all the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil, inspires us with resolutions to confess his Name in the face of all opposition, and to persevere in the practice of that pure and holy religion which he has left us, and assures us of his favour and protection here, and of a glorious and eternal inheritance among the Saints in heaven.

When *Christ* discovers himself in his glorious and ineffable perfections to the sincere and humble soul, the world with all its vanities disappear, the delights and enjoyments of sense no longer please, he even wonders how he ever came to set his affections upon such trifling and insignificant vanities, as the most esteemed things in this world now appear to him.

CHAP. IV.

A Prayer for Grace and Instruction.

(Disciple.)

O LORD, my gracious GOD, thou art my all, my only God; but who, alas! am I, that I should take upon me to speak to so great, so glorious a Majesty? Poor sinful dust, and ashes, as I am; a wretched worm; less than the least of all thy servants; much less, much viler, and more despicable than I can imagine, or am able to express or conceive. And this very vileness, LORD I entreat thee to consider, that so my helpless and deplorable condition may move thy tender compassion to a miserable creature, who neither is, nor hath, nor can do any thing without thee. For thou only art good, and holy, and powerful; thou art of power so boundless, of mercy so diffusive, that thou fillest all things with thy goodness; and none but those guilty souls, who refuse to partake of thy grace, are shut out from its kindly influences. Behold me then hungry and thirsting after thy righteousness; O let me not be sent empty away. Stir up thy bowels, and remember thy compassions, and loving-kindnesses of old; and fill my soul with thy grace and heavenly dispositions, that it may be a mansion fit to entertain that blessed Inhabitant, who will not take up his dwelling in defiled and desolate places.

But how can I furnish a house fit to receive my LORD, except he will please to assist and supply my wants? How can I sustain the miseries and temptations of a vexatious and troublesome world,

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except thou graciously interpose and strengthen my weakness? Hide not then thy face from me; neither delay thy fatherly care; for if thou grant me not refreshing dews, and water not my heart with thy grace, it will remain a dry and barren soil. Teach me, O God, to know and do thy will; and with sincere humility, and indefatigable zeal, enable me to persevere in my obedience. For thou art my wisdom, and my righteousness; and my infirmities are not unknown to thee; thou knowest me perfectly, and wert acquainted with all my defects, not only before I was born, but even long before the creation of the world itself.

C H A P. V.

Worship God in humility and truth.

Christ
(~~Disciple.~~)

K NOW, my son, I know thy frailties, and thy dangers; but let not these discourage thy endeavours. Seek and love the truth, and let thy heart be right with me, and thou needest not fear any thing. For truth and sincerity will be thy protection, and defend thee from the assaults of the devil, and the attempts of wicked and deceitful men. Those who are *thus set free, shall be free indeed*; John viii. nor shall the enemies to the truth be able to ensnare or divert thee from thy duty, by all the allurements and discouragements they may throw in thy way.

(*Disciple.*) True, LORD. And this persuasion makes me more earnestly implore thy assistance; that

that thou, who art truth itself, would'st in thy great mercy condescend, to instruct and direct me; to preserve and protect me, to break to pieces the snares of the ungodly, to deliver my soul, and me, in thy truth; to purge me from all corrupt and inordinate affections, that by my own happy experience I may be convinced of what I already believe, and so render thy service perfect freedom.

(*Christ.*) My children cannot be more zealously disposed to ask these blessings, than I am ready and pleased to grant them. Hear therefore what is the truth, and in what manner thou mayest recommend thyself to my favour and acceptance. Reflect with sad remorse upon thy past offences; let the remembrance of thy sins render thee vile and contemptible in thy own eyes; and beware, that no confidence in thy best works swell thee with vain conceits of thy own deserts. For it is most certain that thou art a sinner, laden with guilt and many grievous infirmities, naturally prone to vanity, easily seduced, quickly diverted from good resolutions, and overcome by very slight temptations. In short, thou art possess'd of no excellence, which can in any measure justify thy pride or boasting; but numberless occasions there are to exercise thy humility and lamentation, infinitely more in truth, than thou canst be duly sensible of.

Let not then the mistaken notions of thy own merit delude thee with false appearances of worth and perfection; let not thy affections be misled to hunt after vain and wretched objects, or think any advantage thou enjoyest can deserve thy praise or admiration, thy love and pains; except such only as are fix'd and eternal. Let truth be thy chief delight, for this is unchangeable; let thy own unworthiness be the chief object of thy hatred and

contempt, for this is the vilest, the justest thing, with which thou oughtest to be displeased. No calamity should be feared or declined so much as sin. For no loss, no worldly disappointment or misfortune can have so fatal consequences, as the loss of a good conscience and God's favour, by transgressing his righteous commands.

Some men are more ambitious of subtilty of knowledge in religion, than desirous of an humble and sincere obedience. They are acted by a spirit of pride and curiosity, and affect to penetrate the mysteries of faith, and value themselves much more for being able learnedly to argue for truth, than for adorning it by their lives, and rendring that knowledge effectual to salvation. Such men frequently fall into dangerous snares. I will shew them the folly of their arrogance, and suffer them to perish through the vanity of their own imaginations.

But let thy mind be employed upon other sorts of enquiries, and account it greater wisdom to be better acquainted with thy own works, than those of Almighty God. *His ways are unsearchable, and past finding out*; Rom. xi. but it is necessary that thy own should be nicely examined. And the consideration of the evil thou hast done, and the good thou hast left undone, will turn more to thy advantage, than thy scholastick speculations, concerning the divine nature and counsels. Some place their religion in images, some in good books, some in external shew and pomp of devotion, measuring their piety by the prayers they say, the sermons they hear, the meals they abstain from: Others honour me with their lips, and talk familiarly of me, whose hearts I am as utter a stranger to, as their allowing me no place in their thoughts
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and affections can make me. But others again, without such formal pretences, are men of true spiritual wisdom, and inward purity; their desires and conversation are in heaven, and earthly entertainments are the objects of their contempt; they even grudge those hours, which the necessary cares for supporting their bodies cut off the greater concerns of their immortal souls. And these are the men, that willingly hear, and bring a temper truly prepared to receive the instructions of my Spirit: In them he reigns and triumphs. For, having subdued the corrupt inclinations of flesh, and inspired them with a true christian bravery of soul; they condemn the treacherous and delusive vanities of this world, and lay out all their love and labour upon the joys of that better world, which, till God thinks fit to admit them into it, they endeavour to get some foretaste of, by keeping their minds continually intent upon it.

R E F L E X I O N.

HE that is possess'd of the truth, as it is in *Jesus*, need be under no fearful apprehensions of what the world can do unto him; Truth is a rock that will weather all storms; troubles and afflictions do but make it shine the more illustrious; the frowns and ill treatment of the wicked affect it not; its original is God himself; for God is truth.

Truth will teach us the way to happiness; it will discover to us the ugliness and odious nature of sin; it points out the directest road to heaven; it shews us the amiable perfections and divine excellencies of a crucified *Jesus*; it demonstrates the folly, the blindness and ignorance of a vain and wicked world, that can prefer the trifling satisfaction of gratifying
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their unbounded lusts, to the spiritual and refined delights of true piety and a virtuous disposition.

Humility is the constant companion of truth; for no sooner does truth discover to us the baseness of our hearts, the irregularity of our lives, the odious nature of our sins, the wrath of God which they expose us to, and the invaluable satisfaction that the blessed *Jesus* made to divine justice, to make a reconciliation between an angry God, and our sinful souls; no sooner are these things displayed to us in their true and lively colours, but we must be affected with the deepest humility, we must humble ourselves in dust and ashes, take shame to ourselves, and in the anguish of our hearts, cry out, *Woe unto us miserable sinners!* What have I done? Is it possible that I, who am under so many such infinite obligations to the divine Majesty, should be guilty of so many, such enormous offences against my best, my greatest benefactor? Is it possible that I should slight the gracious offers of his love, or be so ungrateful, as to take occasion from the multiplying of his kindnesses, to multiply my sins against him? Where was my reason, when I suffer'd the pleasures and vanities of this world to take possession of my heart, in preference to the solid comforts of a good conscience; when I prefer'd wealth and grandeur to the riches of divine grace, and the company and conversation of worldly-minded men, to a holy converse with the blessed *Jesus*, in society with his faithful servants in the celebration of his ordinances and institutions?

C H A P. VI.

The wonderful Effects of divine Love.

(Disciple.)

I Praise and magnify thy glorious Name, O God of heaven, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the goodness and tender compassions, with which thou hast been graciously pleased to remember and relieve me thy unworthy creature. For unto thy loving kindness alone, O Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, are owing all the supports, with which the soul of thy sinful servant hath been at any time refreshed in the midst of my afflictions. And therefore to thee alone be the praise. To thee, O Father, with thy only begotten Son, and the blessed Spirit the Comforter, will I render, as is most due, honour and thanksgiving for evermore. Come then, O Blessed Lord, into that soul, for which thou hast expressed so great a tenderness, and let thy presence replenish my heart with gladness: For thou art my health, my joy, and my glory, my hope and my refuge in the day of distress, and my everlasting reward.

With sorrow I must confess that my love is weak, and my virtue imperfect; nor can the one be supported without thy grace strengthening it, or the other be cherished, or increased, unless thou fan thy holy fire, and nourish it with thy heavenly comforts. O visit me then with thy salvation, and assist me to improve under thy holy discipline. Purge and purify my heart from all corrupt affections, and irregular passions; heal my spiritual diseases, and take away that dross and filth, which

which hinder my purer delights of divine love, trouble and discompose my patience, and weaken my resolutions of perseverance.

For love is strong and powerful, a noble virtue, and a wonderful advantage in well-doing. It lightens the most heavy burthens, makes difficulties easy, and smooths the rugged ways of duty; it sweetens the bitterness of sufferings, and gives them an agreeable relish. This is the principle, which fires us with a vigorous and active zeal, inspires us to attempt brave and noble actions, and spurs us on with an impatient desire of still greater degrees of perfection. For love ever strives to be uppermost, and disdains to take up with low and vulgar attainments. It abhors confinement, and would fain be freed from all worldly affections; that so its inward and spiritual views may not be interrupted by any temporal good or evil, which obscure or straiten it. In love is the perfection of pleasure and strength; it is higher than heaven; broader than the sea; it fills the spacious universe, for it is born of God; the first and best of all his creatures: And as it came from him, so it can never rest till it have got above all finite beings, and till it center again in that Only, that infinite Good, from whence it was originally derived.

The person who possesses it, never thinks he can make too much haste, does every thing with chearfulness and pleasure, and suffers no interruptions to stop him in his course: He gives all things liberally, and yet possesses all, because his soul is united to that supreme Good, in and from whom is every good and perfect gift. He looks not so much at the gift as the Giver; and be the quality of that what it will, it only serves to



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to render him more grateful to its Author. Love knows no bounds, no measure; it never thinks it can do enough; it reaches at things even above its capacity, not considering so much what it is able, as what it is willing and disposed to effect; the vehemence of its desires takes off all sense of difficulty, and it thinks nothing so great but that it is in duty bound to aim at it. And hence proceed those wonderful and astonishing achievements, which love does daily perform, where the fire continues strong, and is not damped by sloth and faint-heartedness.

Love is always awake, is never tired with labour, never oppressed with affliction, nor discouraged by fear; but, like a clear and strong flame, is ever mounting upwards, and clears its way thro' all opposition. It cries continually in the ears, (for fervent love is that cry which pierces the ears) of the most High; and the constant language of those devout souls which are inflamed with it, is to this effect: *My God, my Love, thou art my all; and I am entirely thine.* Enlarge my heart, and make me capable of yet more love; that I may feel and feast upon the sweetness of these delightful affections, and even melt away and lose myself in the extasies and charms of this heavenly disposition. Increase and brighten up this divine flame, that, not content to excel others, I may daily excel myself. Teach me the song of love, impart thyself unto me, and receive me into favour with him in whom my soul delighteth; and fill me with such raptures of joy and praise, that every sense, and even life itself may be swallowed up in bliss. Let me love thee much more than I love myself; nay, let me love myself and all good men, to whom thou art dear, only in and for thee; for thus hast thou commanded in that

law of love, which is but as it were a ray or beam of thy glorious and divine excellence.

The love of God in a believer is quick in its motions, sincere in its intentions, ardent and zealous in devotion, sweet to the soul, brave in attempting, patient in enduring, faithful in executing, prudent in action, slow in resentment, generous and manly, and seeks not to please the person's self, but the object of his love. For, where a man has only his own advantage in view, there interest, not love, is the principle which governs him. This kind of love is cautious and circumspect, upright and humble; not soft and effeminate, not fickle and fantastical; not fond of vanities, but sober and grave, pure and refined, constant and sedate, severe and reserved. This disposes us to submission and respect towards our superiors; to a mean and modest opinion of ourselves; to gratitude and devotion towards God; it inspires hope and holy trust, even in times of troubles and affliction. And it is necessary that it should do so, because no man is so happy as to enjoy this love without a mixture of pain, or always to live under the light of God's countenance, so as that no clouds should ever intercept the cheering warmth of his favour, and create some dark intervals.

That man therefore has no title to the character of one that loves God, who is not disposed and content to suffer any afflictions, which the divine providence sees fit to inflict; or thinks much to do whatever his will declares to be his duty. In a word, the hardest and most ungrateful proofs of our virtue, best manifest the fervency and sincerity of it; and if vexations and calamitous accidents cool or draw off our affections, this is an argument, that a man is not yet what the Apostle requires we should

should all be, *Rooted and grounded in love.* Ephes. iii. 17.

REFLEXION.

DIVINE love is a most noble principle; and the soul that is actuated by it, seems, as it were, a distinct species of itself; its views reach beyond all sensible objects; its ambition extends beyond all earthly crowns and kingdoms; the world and all its charms are least in its esteem; its eye is fixed on celestial beauties; its desires are in heaven; the blessed *Jesus*, cloathed in all his amiable perfections, fills the whole extent of its wishes; the riches of whose grace is all the wealth that the divine lover wants; the assurance of whose love is his greatest comfort and consolation; and to be rank'd among his children, the greatest honour he aspires to.

But this is such a pitch of divine love, that few can arrive at. This spark of heavenly fire is too apt to be quenched by the prevalence of the sensual appetite; is too often diverted from its true object by illusions and deceitful appearances thrown in its way by the grand adversary of our souls; the trials, troubles, and afflictions with which God is pleased, for our good, to exercise us, too frequently damp its vigour, hinder its increase, and prove a dead weight upon its most lively exertions. Our passions, which are inseparable from humanity, are often ready to choak up this divine principle; and so many are the obstructions we meet with, both from ourselves, and from the world; from without, and from within, to prevent or destroy the very existence of this love in our hearts, that it is a miracle of God's special grace

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and love to us, that we are enabled at any rate to give it a place in our affections.

O blessed and glorious LORD GOD, spread abroad thy love in my soul, kindle up this holy flame in my affections, enrich my heart with the precious oil of thy grace, touch it with a ray of thy love, so shall it become a burning and a shining light; it will warm us into a fervency of zeal; it will comfort us in the cold winter of afflictions; it will be an over-balance to the heat of persecution; it is the richest cloathing to the naked, the most delicious food to the hungry, the best provision for the poor, the noblest cordial to the fainting spirit. O Blessed JESUS, give me a more perfect view of thy own loveliness, so shall my love to thee increase, the smallest seed of it grow into a flourishing tree; tho' little in its beginning, it will gradually proceed to the highest perfection, and tho' sown in much weakness, and in the midst of many sorrows and imperfections, it will, by the assistance of divine Grace, rise to a noble height, and will rest satisfied with no attainments, till it receives its full completion in eternal glory.

CHAP. VII.

The Evidences of true Love.

(*Christ.*)

I HAVE observed, my son, thy notions of divine love; but thou, alas! art not yet arrived to that resolute bravery and prudence, expected of those who have this love in their hearts.

(*Dis-*

(*Disciple.*) LORD, make me sensible wherein I fail, and teach me how to mend my errors!

(*Christ.*) A small temptation shocks thy obedience. Thou grumblest at difficulties, and fallest from thy own stedfastness, if I but seem to withdraw my favour from thee. The comforts and assistance of my grace are to be wish'd with zeal, but not with impatience; nor mayest thou so set thy heart upon them, as presently to shrink, if such supplies do not at all times answer thy expectation. The reason why I hide my face, is to try thy courage. For true christian magnanimity is most eminently seen in troubles and calamities; in turning the deaf ear to all those crafty insinuations of the enemy, which take the advantage of melancholy and deep perplexity of heart, to seduce and destroy unstable souls, by tempting them to despair. This virtue rejoices in prosperity, but does it with such temper, as not to be offended, and fall away by reason of adversity.

He that loves with prudence, keeps his eyes upon the Giver, considers the kindness and disposition of his Friend, and values the gift by that, not by its own quality and intrinsic worth. He finds more real satisfaction in my affection, than in the largest and most desirable benefits which it brings with it. I do not absolutely condemn all doubts and sad misgivings, for to these the best of men are liable; and the infirmities of nature will not suffer such perfect evenness of mind, which is always equally affected with the love and delights of holiness. Those endearing pleasures which good men sometimes feel themselves transported with, are the effect of my special grace and favour, and great indulgence; not the necessary and inseparable consequences of virtue. The sweetest foretastes of heavenly

heavenly joys are not so regular as to be depended upon, till we come to the fruition of that land of promise, the heavenly Canaan. And therefore we ought not to draw conclusions against ourselves on the account of those who want them; because in this life they are given discretionally, and frequently are forerunners of some severe and more seasonable trial. And when that trial takes place, then to persist in doing well, to strive manfully against all reluctances of frail flesh and blood, and persevere in despite of all the importunities and discouraging suggestions of the tempter, or of thy own corrupt and vitiated affections; this is a proof of true spiritual bravery, and entitles such valiant combatants to a noble reward, and exceeding bright crown.

Let reason therefore, and a well-grounded faith, not fancy, humour, or imagination, rule thy behaviour; and howsoever thy soul may be affected, let thy purposes of obedience be still the same, and thy perseverance unbroken. Sometimes perhaps thou art all in rapture and lost in joy, and these extasies are not, what the prophane world suppose, mere enthusiastick dreams and delusions: Sometimes again thou wilt relapse into weakness and wandrings; these are not thy choice, but thy misfortune; nor dost thou create them to thyself, but suffer them much against thy will. Now what is not a man's own voluntary act, shall never be imputed to him as a fault; and thus whatever befalls us by God's permission, or the frailty of nature, will, if rightly managed, tend greatly to thy advantage, and rather improve than endanger thy virtue.

'Tis necessary, indeed, that you should know, and constantly remember, that the implacable enemy

enemy of souls is ever labouring by all means to cool and slacken your zeal. He watches, and greedily lays hold of every occasion to damp your devotion, to persuade you to neglect, or abate of, your prayers or other holy exercises; to divert your thoughts from Christ and his sufferings, and fix them upon objects of a different kind, to beat you off from that strict guard, which you ought always to keep over your soul; and to undermine your good intentions, and repeated resolutions. He conveys many loose and wicked thoughts into your heart, uses a thousand stratagems and artifices, to make you believe that religion is a tiresome, tedious and unnecessary thing, and to draw off your attendance upon God in prayers, in hearing his word, and in reading the holy Scriptures. And 'tis his greatest pleasure, if by degrees he can draw you to a neglect of these things; as on the contrary nothing more provokes his malice, and crosses his designs, than to see men frequently upon their knees, zealous in discovering and confessing their sins; devout and attentive comers to church, and constant receivers of the Lord's Supper. When therefore he would persuade you to be cold and negligent in any thing of this nature, beware that you give no credit to his false and deluding insinuations; for they are so many snares laid, to captivate and destroy you. Resolutely reply to him, *Get thee behind me, Satan*; "Blush, "if thou canst, thou malicious spirit, at thy own "treacherous villainy; I am well aware of thy "deadly baits; and am sensible that hell and "death are upon the hook; thy sly deceits have "no effect upon me, for I am already resolved, "and my Saviour, who vainquished thee upon "the cross, will strengthen my weakness, and
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“ enable me to overcome thy temptations.
“ Think not to terrify me with difficulties ; for
“ death and sufferings are much more easy to be
“ borne than guilt and sin ; and these I had much
“ rather chuse than once to comply with thy vile
“ suggestions. Be gone then, and for ever hold
“ thy peace ; for I will stop my ears, and am
“ from this moment resolved to be deaf to thy
“ most troublesome solicitations. Thou thinkest
“ to overbear a poor weak mortal ; but even that
“ mortal is a match *for thee through Christ that*
“ *strengthens him.* And strengthen me he will ;
“ *for the Lord is my light and salvation, whom*
“ *then shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of*
“ *my life, of whom then shall I be afraid ? Tho’*
“ *an host were banded together against me, yet will*
“ *I not be dismay’d ; for the Lord is my Helper,*
“ *and my God is the rock of my confidence.*

Fight therefore the good fight, and follow the Captain of thy salvation, like a stout soldier. And, if at any time, through human infirmities, thou shouldst lose ground, rally thy forces again quickly, and begin a second engagement with redoubled vigour ; and doubt not but I will send thee seasonable recruits. But if at any time thou shouldst prove victorious, let not this success exalt thee beyond measure. For pride and arrogance are of dangerous consequence, they often end in most fatal errors, and are justly punished with an almost incurable blindness of mind. Let the examples of vain men, whom thou hast seen undone by their own folly and my just indignation, be duly considered, as so many sea-marks, to warn thee from steering the same dangerous course ; and the greater the conquests which thou obtainest over the devil and thy own frailty, the more humble
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and cautious let these advantages make thee in thy conduct; and the more just to God, in ascribing the whole success and glory to the sole assistance of his all-powerful grace.

REFLEXION.

LOVE is indefatigable; it is not satisfied with a few warm expressions of affection, with performing some acts of friendship and service; but if opportunities do not offer, it will seek occasions of doing friendly offices.

But the divine lover, or the believer whose affections are spiritualized, who has received Jesus Christ into his heart, who has left all, who has sincerely renounced and turned his back upon the world, the flesh, and the devil, at the command and for the sake of his dear Redeemer, this is the man whose love is fixed, unalterably fixed on the blessed Jesus. It is true, his Lord may sometimes shew his frowns, and put a stop to those free and sweet intercourses that at times have delighted the soul, and by which it has been raptur'd as it were into the third heaven; yet will it not let go its hope that the LORD of its wishes will again return with smiles in his countenance, cheer its drooping spirits, and remove every cause of its disquietude.

Expect not therefore a constant continuance of these celestial joys; thou hast many enemies to encounter, numerous corruptions of thy heart to mortify and subdue; in the doing of which thou wilt find many causes for thy sorrow and complaint, and consequently wilt meet with many interruptions to the ardency of thy love; yet thou must not imagine, that because Christ may at present hide his face from thee, therefore thou hast no place in his

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love; rather think that his design in so doing is, that thou may'st set the greater value on his love, and to prove whether thine to him is genuine, pure, and of the right kind.

It behoves thee therefore, that howsoever thou art afflicted in thy body or mind, to be careful that the firmness of thy love be not shaken, that there be no decay in thy pious affections, no slackness in the fervency of thy zeal; but that how severely soever God may deal with thee, thou wilt still retain thine integrity.

There is one certain rule by which thou wilt know whether thy love be true or counterfeit; namely, that when thou art attack'd by the tempting pleasures of sense, or by the vanities and allurements of the world, observe whether thou findest in thyself a willingness to comply with them, or a reluctance to, and an abhorrence of these, and whatever else may obstruct the sweet and delightful communion which thou earnestly desirest with thy dear Redeemer. Canst thou say, with the Apostle, *I delight in the law of God, after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 22. 23. 24.

CHAP. VIII.

Be not vain of the Grace bestowed upon thee.

(*Christ.*)

MY Son, when thou perceivest thy soul warmed with devotion and holy zeal for my service, I advise thee to decline all those methods of publishing it to the world, which vain men are so industrious to take, and be satisfied that it is known only to God and thy own conscience. Rather endeavour to moderate and suppress those pompous expressions of it, in which some place the very perfection of zeal. Think meanly of thy own virtues. Boast not of that grace, whereby it has pleased God to make thee differ from another. But let the consideration of thy own unworthiness make thee fear lest thou shouldest lose those gifts, which thou didst not deserve ever to have enjoy'd. This is not only an undeserved, but is also a very short and uncertain privilege; for the brightest and warmest zeal is apt to languish and wax cold; and unless men could assure themselves of such a degree of Grace, as would render these variable natures of theirs fix'd and unalterable, the fervours of religious and holy desires can never be constant and equal.

While therefore thou art enjoying these pleasing pious comforts, humble thy soul with reflections upon thy impotence and misery, thy coldness and deadness, when thou hast them not. And consider withal, that the improvement and excellence of a Christian's virtue consists, not only in the thankful use of grace, but in a modest, humble and resigned temper, which can bear its being taken away with-

out murmuring or despondency; still exciting and encouraging itself, not in the least abating his diligence in holy duties, and not once suffering sloth, or despair, or discontent, to lessen one whit of a man's best endeavours, to do the utmost his condition is capable of.

This is an excellence which but few arrive at; Idleness and Impatience are the usual effects of spiritual disappointments. Which yet is most unreasonable, did we but consider in whose disposal these as well as all other successes are. For it is not in the power of man to command events; God is sole Master of his own favours. He gives to whom he pleases; nor will he be limited, otherwise, than by his own wisdom, what or how much, or in what time or manner he shall bestow his gifts. And even, when he is most liberal, men may and often do convert his best gifts into occasions of their own destruction. Thus some men of bold ungovern'd zeal aspire at things above their strength, and discover more vehemence than conduct in their actions. They are perfectly carried out of themselves with eagerness; forget they are still poor worms crawling upon earth, and think of nothing less than building their nest in heaven. Now these are often left to themselves, and taught by sad experience, that the best endeavours of man are weak and ineffectual, and that none soars to heaven, except divinely assisted in his flight, and mounted upon my own wings.

It is therefore highly necessary, that persons of more zeal than experience should be cautious, not to proceed upon their own false measure of themselves, but rather refer their proceedings to the direction, and better judgment of some persons, whom length of time, and much observation hath taught to temper

per those vain conceits they are apt to entertain of their own strength, and to proportion their undertakings to their circumstances. But this is a submission which humility must qualify them for. For he who is wise in his own eyes, can seldom bear to be directed by another. And this consideration makes a very indifferent degree of knowledge, attended with a modest and governable mind, much more safe and eligible, than the highest attainments that are attended with pride and self-conceit. The mighty transports and great satisfaction men frequently feel from their own improvement in goodness, are of dangerous consequence, if they be suffered to obliterate the remembrance of a man's former weakness, and his fears of relapsing into sin again. And on the other hand, these fears may run into excess, that is, when difficulties tempt men to despair, and beget melancholy distrusts of God's ability and readiness to relieve and rescue them by the succours of that grace, in whose power it is to scatter and defeat the most violent temptations.

The same disposition of soul, which lulls us in security in times of prosperity and peace, inclines to fearfulness and dejection of mind in the day of adversity and trial. For would a man but guard himself against vain confidences, and proceed always with caution and prudence, when his graces and his hopes are at the highest; thus would he preserve himself from those dangers, which an unwary warmth, and too sanguine hopes, are apt to involve him in. And therefore, when you form to yourself the fairest and most promising expectations, it will be proper to consider, what may become of you, if God should hide his face, and abate or wholly withdraw those cheering comforts, with which you are now so much exalted. And so again, when these
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are interrupted, support your spirits in those dark intervals, with the hope, that day may break upon you again, and that this night of affliction is lengthened, to make you more advised, and get the greater honour.

For such trials as these are more advantageous to my faithful servants, than a continual flow of prosperity and consolation could possibly be. They must needs be so; since virtue does not consist in abundance of illumination and knowledge; but in lowliness of mind, in meekness and charity, in a perfect resignation to God, and a sincere disposition to serve and please him; in a just sense of our own vileness, and not only thinking very meanly of ourselves, but being well satisfied to be so thought of by others.

R E F L E X I O N.

GRACE and humility have so near an affinity, that where the one is, the other is never absent. If thou findest in thyself greater degrees of grace than thou perceivest in thy neighbour or fellow-Christian, be not lifted up, but rather be thankful that God hath thus favour'd thee above others.

Consider likewise thy former miserable and comfortless condition, when thou wert destitute of this divine principle; for when thou wert without that, thou wast at the same time without God, without hopes, without happiness; labouring under the power and guilt of thy sins; a slave to thy lusts, and in continual danger of eternal ruin. But to whom dost thou owe that happy alteration which thou findest in thyself; to whom, but to him who has shed abroad his grace in thy heart? What then hast thou to brag of? What reason hast thou to boast

boast of that which God might have bestowed on another, as well as on thee? It rather becomes thee to be humble under the sense of those distinguishing favours which thou enjoyest above others; meekly to receive that honour which characterizes thee a child of God, and a favourite of heaven. If thou enjoyest the comfortable influences of the Holy Spirit, consider that the same Spirit can withdraw his comforts, and leave thee overwhelm'd in darkness and dejection.

God is pleased to deal many ways with his children; sometimes by crosses and affliction; again he gives them success and prosperity in their worldly concerns; now he brings them down to the very gates of despair; anon he lifts up the light of his countenance upon them, shews himself a reconciled God and Father, speaks peace and pardon to their souls; and thus he tries them, thus he purges them from the leaven of pride and hypocrisy, humbles them in their own opinion of themselves, and so fits and prepares them for the enjoyment of those pure and refined pleasures that are reserved for such only as have their affections weaned from this world, and are fixed on heavenly and spiritual objects.

CHAP. IX.

Of humbling ourselves before God.

(Disciple.)

BEhold, now I take upon me to speak unto my Lord, who am but dust and ashes, Gen. xviii. vile and sinful dust and ashes! For, should I think better of my

my self, I should make my God my enemy, and stand convicted by the undeniable testimony, and just reproaches of my own guilty conscience. But if I humble my soul, if I think meanly of my own merit, and believe myself to be that wretched thing I really am, thy grace will exalt, thy light cheer and support me, and all that groundless arrogance to which my corrupt heart is naturally inclined, vanishes into nothing. O! give me then a right understanding of my self; help me truly to discern, what I now am, what I originally was, and whence I came; that I am nothing, and proceeded from nothing; and, if destitute of thy grace, have nothing left but sin and infirmity, which I had much better be without. And yet as vile, as sinful, as dejected, as I am of my self, as soon as the bright beams of thy favour are cast upon me, my weakness is made strong, and my heaviness enliven'd into joy. I cannot observe the sudden wondrous change without amazement, nor can I account for the happy exaltation of my nature; which, tho' by its own weight is inclined to sink perpetually, and, by a fatal tendency to sin and hell, is press'd down with a load of flesh and frailty, is yet, by the powerful mighty workings of thy grace, enabled to aspire to spiritual and refined objects, and take bold flights to thee and heaven.

This, I am truly sensible, is the strange effect of thy free grace alone, preventing my desires, inspiring noble thoughts, assisting my weaknesses, supplying my wants, and rescuing me from innumerable dangers; which, without these powerful succours, must inevitably destroy and swallow me up. For an inordinate love of myself had formerly like to have been my ruin, but a sincere love of thee, and an entire dependance upon thy goodness, recovers

and restores me ; and the more I love and confide in thee, the less reason I find to value and have any confidence in any thing of my own. For thou my dear Redeemer, art bountiful and kind, infinitely above my deserts : My deserts ! Alas, they are none at all, or worse than none : But thou exceedest even my largest desires, and givest more, infinitely more, than I either presume to ask, or am able to express.

Eternal thanks and praise be therefore rendred to my God, for his unspeakable goodness, which disdains not to bestow the precious gifts of his grace and Spirit, upon a wretch utterly unworthy of the least of all his mercies. Yea, blessed and adored be his Name for his liberality and long-suffering, which, in despite of all our provocations, continues to oblige those by kindness, who, by their former ingratitude and abuse of it, had justly forfeited all future favours ; and, by many excellent arts, and holy importunities, invites and draws men to himself and their own happiness, who have naturally an aversion to both. Even so, blessed Jesus, extend thy compassion, and continue thy care of us, who are too prone to forsake thee, and ruin ourselves. Oh ! do thou work in us thankful, humble, pious dispositions ; for we ourselves are nothing, and thou art holiness and health, our only strength and salvation.

REFLEXION.

WHAT infinite condescension is it in thee the great God of heaven, who art so holy that thou chargest even thy angels with folly, to suffer such a poor wretched worm as I am, to hold discourse with thee, or that that shouldest take the least

notice or regard of me ! LORD ! I am unworthy to take thy holy Name into my polluted lips, or to look up unto the place where thy honour dwells. My heart is full of corruption ; the natural bent of my inclination is to sin and vanity ; *from the crown of my head, to the soles of my feet, I am, as the Prophet speaks, in a spiritual sense, all over wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.* How then can I expect that the pure eyes of thy holiness should look on me otherwise than with abhorrence and detestation ? But thou art God, and not a man ; and therefore it is that I am not consumed. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins ; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him, Ps. ciii. 10, 11. And again, verse 12, 13. *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that we are but dust.*

Humble thyself, O my soul, under a sense of thy own vileness ; prostrate thyself before him in dust and ashes ; reflect on the infinite disparity betwixt God and thee ; consider thyself incapable, as of thy own ability, to think a good thought, much less to perform any service that shall be acceptable to a Being infinitely holy, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with any approbation or delight.

Where then is thy help, where is thy comfort, thy dernier resort, O miserable wretch, in this thy forlorn distressed condition ? Where, but in thy dear Redeemer, the blessed Jesus, who graciously became a Mediator, and exposed himself to the wrath of God, to save thee from the just demerits of thy sins, to procure thy pardon, and re-
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store thee to that happiness which thou hadst forfeited, and which thou could'st never have recovered without making such a satisfaction as thou wert never able to make; such as should be adequate to the heinousness of thy offence. It is to the love of thy Blessed Saviour that thou art alone indebted for all the comforts and consolations thou enjoyest here, or expectest hereafter. To thee therefore belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face; but to him ascribe, as is most due, all honour, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever-more.

CHAP. X.

Do all to the Glory of God.

(*Christ.*)

THE sure and only way for thee to happiness, is, to make me the chief and ultimate end of thy actions and desires. This will be the best proof of thy sincerity; by this thy mind is refined and purified from all those sordid interests and partial respects, which are apt to corrupt human nature, which is of itself too much addicted to private gain and selfishness, and those false prospects of happiness which the love of this world vainly proposes. For, no sooner does a man descend to these, and seek *himself* in all he does, but he finds his own insufficiency to compass his intentions, and grows barren and unprofitable. Keep me then constantly in view, and aim at nothing but the advancement of my honour: which is indeed

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deed but reasonable and just, since I am the first and most perfect good ; the source from whence all things flow, and therefore all of right return to, and should center at least in me again. I ask for nothing as my own, the tribute of a thankful acknowledgment of the successes given by my providence, of the actions performed by virtue of my assistance, of the very faculties and powers originally inspired by my creating Spirit.

The high and honourable, as well as mean and low, the rich and poor, all drink of this common fountain, and the most exalted of the children of men can do nothing, till furnished with ability from hence. This spring is inexhaustible, and they who receive most, and are grateful in their returns, on such I bestow more liberal measures of grace. Them that honour me, I will most certainly honour and bless in a visible and eminent manner ; but if men glory in any thing but the LORD, I blast their devices, disappoint their hopes, and make them ashamed of their vain boasting. For so have I ordered matters by my providence ; that no true or lasting satisfaction shall ever fill that soul whose affections are set upon private and paltry advantages. Vexations from without, and perplexities from within, are the natural consequences of worldly desires, and selfish principles.

If therefore thou hast received or done any good thing, take care that thou doest not place the honour and thanks due for it upon thyself, or any other person. For this would be to rob God of his due, from whom men receive whatever they have, or are, and stand in duty and equity bound, to pay him their acknowledgments. Since then the whole is my gift, surely to me only belong the whole thanks and praise ; and this is what, as I injure no
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man in requiring, so assure thyself, I will never depart from.

This is the true principle of justice, necessarily to be considered, and thoroughly submitted to; because it chastizes and utterly confounds that other most pernicious principle of pride and vain-glory, to which mankind are so extremely prone. Nor is it less their happiness than their duty: For, where this generous love and regard of me takes place, it does not only engage my favour, but secures the man from from envy and discontent, prejudice, and every other passion, that uses to embarrass little and worldly minded people. For this respectful deference and fervent love of God enlarges the soul, and fills it with great and truly noble thoughts. And therefore this is an undoubted mark of true and heavenly wisdom, to make me the only object of its joy, and hope; for, how can he be wise, who does not understand that God is the perfection and original of all good, and that the necessary consequence of his being so, is, that he is to be praised, honoured, and adored, in, and for, and above all: Since all the good for which men have the greatest value, is by communication from him; an emanation from his fulness, an effect of that sole, that universal cause?

R E F L E X I O N.

WHOEVER seeks for happiness in this world, will find himself miserably disappointed. God alone is the chief good, and ought to be the ultimate end of all our aims, the great point to which we should direct all our views, designs, and endeavours. No other object but the Almighty God can fill the wishes, or bound the desires of an immortal soul.

soul. This will easily appear by considering, that, before we have a due sense of the all-sufficiency of the supreme Being, how apt and ready we are to run from one object to another ; how soon our sensual appetites are cloy'd by confining them to one particular object ; that the soul is not satisfied even with the highest attainments [of human knowledge ; and could its faculties be extended to pierce through all the secrets of nature, and to comprehend all the intricacies of providence, it would be still aspiring to higher degrees of perfection. But when it makes the infinite Being the subject of its enquiries, it finds enough to employ all its powers, and to fill its whole capacity either with knowledge, or happiness. Here only can the soul find rest ; in this harbour the Believer drops the anchor of his hope ; in this fountain he takes delightful draughts of love ; in this paradise he is sweetly entertained with the most agreeable prospects of grace and glory.

Where-ever the love of God is, there is peace and joy ; but where that is not, there can be no comfort at least, of any long continuance. Horror and darkness must surround that soul which has not the light of God's countenance shining upon it. Let us then be thankful for every degree of divine grace that is bestowed upon us ; let us be still pressing forwards, and endeavour at greater attainments. In order to which let us strive to be duly sensible of our own wants and frailties, so shall we the more eagerly embrace the offers of divine love ; so shall we be the more displeas'd with ourselves, and the more earnestly desire to be filled with every good and perfect gift, which can proceed only from God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraideth not.

CHAP. XI.

God's Service is most desirable.

(Disciple.)

I Will again embolden myself to speak unto the LORD ; nor ought I indeed to be silent, but address myself to thee, my LORD and God, my heavenly King, that fittest on the throne far above the skies, and thus will I proclaim thy mercies and my own happiness. How pure, O LORD, how delightful, how exquisite are the pleasures thou hast in store for them that fear thee, that delight themselves in thy love, that are entirely devoted to thy service. No tongue can sufficiently express the wondrous joys, the transports, and ravishing extacies, which fill those pious souls, that are inflamed with the love, and employed in the contemplation of thee. For this is a subject boundless as thy goodness ; that goodness, which was shown in commanding me out of nothing. And, when that being which thou gavest me was by sins rendred liable to eternal misery, a fresh, and yet more inestimable instance of thy mercy, was that of bestowing upon me a new and better life, when I was worse than nothing ; for thou hadst compassion on my wretched and forlorn condition ; thou soughtest and with tender care broughtest back thy lost sheep, leddest me in the right way, helpedst me to walk in it, and didst instruct and guide me in thy love.

O thou overflowing fountain of endless love, how shall I enough magnify thee ! Can I ever forget thee ; thee, who in my lowest ebb of misery didst condescend so graciously, so effectually, to be
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mindful of me? whose love rescued me from death, and far exceeded my largest hopes; restored me to that favour, which my sins had forfeited, and shewed itself a friend to that wretch, who was become thine and his own enemy. *What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits he hath done unto me?* Ps. cxvi. If I should resolve to serve thee, yet how poor a tribute is that to him whom the whole universe is bound to serve? This is so vastly short of a sufficient return, that I ought rather to admire thy mercy, and esteem it an honour to myself when thou condescendest to accept the service of so poor, so worthless a creature, and dost not disdain to reckon me amongst those, whom thou permittest to do thee homage.

For, even in this I pay thee no more than is justly thy due, since I and all I have are thine. But, why do I talk of serving thee, when by a most astonishing condescension, even thou, the mighty God, art pleased to serve me. For this is the effect of that admirable good providence, which hath contrived and ordered heaven and earth, and all the creatures in such a manner, that they should be useful and beneficial to mankind; which hath appointed blessed spirits above for guards and ministers to the heirs of salvation; and, which is most surprizing, when thou thyself, for my sake, hadst taken upon thee the form of a servant, and becomest a frail, an afflicted man! When thou layest down thy life for miserable sinners, and still givest thyself in grace, and hast promised to give thyself, even the full and eternal fruition of thy glorious Godhead to every sincere believer.

O! that it were in my power to make a suitable return, for love which surpasses, not my thanks only, but even my utmost stretch of thought! O!
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*Christ commends a certain Scribe for his
discreet Answer concerning the Commandments.*

MARK. 12. 34.



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that my ways were so upright, that my whole life might be one continued act of gratitude and obedience! Nay, so great is my faulty, that I could even wish, that any one day of that life might be employed as it ought in thy service. I know, O Lord, that thou art worthy to receive all duty, and honour, and praise for ever. I am sensible, that thou only art my rightful LORD, and I thy poor unworthy servant; that the utmost I can do is thy just due, and that nothing ought to delight us so much as thankfulness and obedience to thee; that nothing else but this should give me any satisfaction, and that, when I have laid myself out entirely upon it, I still come short of my duty. This is the real persuasion, this is the earnest desire of my soul; and where my power falls short of my inclination, there do thou, I beseech thee, strengthen and supply what is wanting, by thy grace, that my actions and behaviour may bear testimony and proportion to my pious disposition.

To be the meanest of thy servants is the highest advancement; to despise and renounce all for thee, is true riches and honour. They who thus enter themselves into thy family, and cheerfully undertake this task, shall be gloriously rewarded; they will feel the pleasures of this world infinitely paid, infinitely exceeded, by the better and larger amends of grace and divine comforts in exchange. They who thus engage themselves in thy service, that abandon worldly cares, and attend to the one thing necessary, to attain to a true and generous freedom of soul. For the strait way of thy commandments is the only perfect law of liberty. O happy confinement! which sets men at liberty from the slavery of sin, from worldly cares and incumbrances, from those insupportable tyrants, our

unruly appetites and domineering passions! O blessed dependance! which takes us into the retinue of the most High God, raises us up to a level with the angels, renders us dear to the Almighty, a terror to evil spirits, conquerors over our worst and fiercest enemy, and recommends us to the love, the praise, the imitation of all good men. Who would not eagerly embrace such a service, where the very work is pleasant, the encouragements paid down in hand noble and great, and the wages promised in recompence for our labours, are the most exquisite, unspeakable, and everlasting happiness?

R E F L E X I O N.

INFINITE are the obligations we are under to our ever blessed and gracious God. 'Tis in him we live, and move, and have our Being; he endow'd us with rational faculties, whereby we are distinguish'd from the brute part of the creation, whereby we are made capable of examining the glorious works of his hands, of tracing the finger of this Almighty Architect through an infinite variety of the most curious workmanship, and of praising, honouring, and adoring that Deity which is manifested even in the minutest part of the universe.

But what shall I say, how shall I describe, what words shall I use to declare the boundless infinity of that love which rescued me, poor, miserable offender, from the vengeance of his vindictive wrath, and the terrors of his impartial justice? That I, who had broken his laws, and, practically bid defiance to his omnipotence; that I, who am cover'd all over with the filth of sin, and had not even so much as a desire to be cleansed from it; that I, who
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have, as much as in me lay, done despite to the holy Spirit of Grace, turn'd a deaf ear to all his gracious calls and invitations; that I, miserable wretch! worthless worm! should find favour in the eyes of this infinitely holy, pure, and perfect Being! How amazing is the condescension! how inconceivable the love, that in this my forlorn and helpless condition, thou shouldest say unto me, live! should'st be willing to pardon my innumerable offences, and to recover me from that inevitable perdition into which I had voluntarily brought myself!

And now, is it possible, O my soul, that thou canst forget all this goodness? Canst thou be so ungrateful as to renounce thy allegiance to thy King, thy Saviour, and thy God? Canst thou be unmindful of all, or, indeed, of any of his tender mercies towards thee? Rather consider what return thou art able to make for all the loving kindness thou hast received at his hands. The least thou canst do is to devote thyself wholly to his service, to promote his glory, and to advance his Name and interest in the world. Canst thou ever be weary of praising, serving, and glorifying God, who is never weary of doing thee good? His sun is never weary of shining upon thee; the earth is never weary of producing sustenance for the support of thy life and well-being; Providence is never weary of its care and protection of thee and thine: Canst thou then slacken in thy love, or be careless and indifferent in thy obedience to the divine commands? Wilt thou love any thing better than him, who has given such unexampled instances of his love for thee, who *commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us?* Rom. v. 8.

CHAP. XII.

*Of rightly managing our Desires.**(Christ.)*

BUT still, my son, there are many things, in which thou art not yet sufficiently instructed.

(Disciple.) Lord, wilt thou be pleased to let me know, and enable me to receive, and do them?

(Christ.) Thy desires must be brought into subjection, and my will take place in every thing; nor must thy own private interest, but the zeal and regard for my honour, and the obedience due to my commands, be the governing principle of all thy actions. You feel desires, like inward springs, put you into motion; and sometimes you are very eager of doing what you are fully persuaded is good. But, even when the thing itself is commendable, the intention of the mind, and motive, men go upon, ought to be carefully attended to. For it makes a vast difference, whether I or themselves be principally in their thoughts. Now it is not difficult to make this discovery. For, if my honour be their great concern; howsoever my providence disposes their affairs, they will conclude that what I do is best, and will be contented with it. But if under this disguise of holiness, there be a lurking corruption of private and self respects, if gain makes men frugal, or ambition virtuous, or the praise of the world charitable; or the consideration of their own health temperate; these are principles, which thou canst
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not safely depend upon. Thy conduct will be unequal, and vary as events do; and every disappointment of thy expectations will produce trouble and impatience.

Be not therefore so confident of every sort of inclination to do well; but first consult with me, and be careful to build upon a good foundation. For men who act upon indirect views, very often repent when it is too late; and that from which they at first proposed great satisfaction and advantage, proves in the end their torment and loss. Nay, I must farther caution you, that you do not take even good inclinations at first sight, nor rashly pursue them without a diligent and prudent observation. For, it may be sometimes necessary to put some restraints upon the very best intention. They who neglect this, and give free scope to their zeal by too great eagerness, often exceed the bounds of moderation and decency; sometimes give offence to their brethren by their extravagant heats, and violent sallies; and sometimes, upon any resistance or difficulty, which obstructs those rash and precipitate fervours, lose all their inward peace, draw back from their good designs, and fall from the height of a rapturous delight, to the extremities of melancholy and despair. So that, to make thy zeal in well-doing in every respect what it ought to be, it is by no means sufficient, that it be honest and well disposed, unless it be also sober, and regular, and discreet.

Again, there are some occasions and circumstances, which render a sort of holy violence necessary, and oblige men to act directly contrary to their inclination; to have no manner of regard to flesh and sense, or to any thing that may seem agreeable

agreeable any farther than it may serve to animate the mind against them, and resolutely engage in a formal war, for the reducing, or keeping them in obedience to the superior faculties of the soul. For, by thus frequently controlling, and counter-working all that human nature hath a tendency to, thou wilt find thyself gradually qualified for duty; and wilt acquire a great readiness of doing, or suffering, whatever shall be imposed upon it. And in these exercises the first foundations are laid, of contentedness with a little, of satisfaction in an obscure and disregarded state, and mean and narrow fortune; and of patience under any crosses or calamities, without those murmuring thoughts, which are apt to beget hard and unbeseeming reflections, and too often break out in wicked complaints, and imprudent expostulations, against the justice, and wisdom, and goodness of God and providence.

R E F L E X I O N.

A pure disinterested sincerity in the performance of religious duties, is not so easily attainable as some may imagine. On the one hand the unsubdued corruptions of the heart, and the unmortified appetites of the flesh, are too apt to encroach upon our affections however sanctified and piously inclin'd; and on the other, we are too prone to pride ourselves in any religious and spiritual gifts and attainments with which it has pleased God to make a distinction between us and others. Expressions of an impetuous zeal for God's glory and service, are not always infallible marks of true piety, any more than violent professions of loyalty and attachment to a government, are the certain signs
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of a true patriot. Hypocrisy, or self-interested views, may lurk under all our fair pretensions to religion; and it is possible we may make the honour of God only as a stale to catch worldly preferments and dignities, which some good men may have in their power to bestow, and with whom we would ingratiate ourselves with a semblance of such virtues as may recommend us to their approbation. This is a disposition of which we should especially beware; for if our hearts are not right with God, we may be assured none of our services will be acceptable to him.

It behoves us therefore to labour with all our might, to subdue and mortify our sensual inclinations and irregular appetites; for so long as there remains in the heart a passionate and prevailing desire for the things of this world, we may depend upon it the love of God is not in us; so long as our affections are confin'd to earth, we must disclaim all pretensions to heaven; while sin maintains its dominion in us, we cannot properly call God our Sovereign, because we refuse submission to his laws, and allegiance to his government; we are no fit mansions for the Holy Spirit to dwell in, so long as we indulge ourselves in the filthy gratification of any sensual lust. It is the austere Christian, who holds a strict rein over his passions, *casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 5. who submits himself to the abasing, humble, and self-denying way of the Gospel; who maintains a perpetual conflict with sin, Satan, and the world; this is the man whose services shall always find acceptance with God; with whom the Holy Spirit will delight to dwell;
and

and who only has a right to all the blessings and benefits which Jesus Christ has purchased for his beloved children.

CHAP. XIII.

Patience is a necessary and reasonable virtue.

(*Disciple.*)

BY all that I am able to collect from the instructions of my dear LORD, and the little experience I have of the world, Patience seems to me a most necessary virtue: For in this life the condition of man is so exposed to calamities and sorrows, that notwithstanding all his endeavours after peace, troubles await him every where, and his state is that of warfare and continual suffering.

(*Christ.*) It is so, my son; nor is it fit it should be otherwise. For those men have a wrong notion of peace, who imagine it consists in freedom from suffering; either in having no troubles at all, or being insensible of any. This is a state, neither attainable by a man, nor convenient for a Christian. The peace, I would have thee endeavour after, is such as consists very well with afflictions. And this is gained, when a man hath brought himself to that equal composure, and resigned temper of soul, as firmly to persist in his duty, and to rest satisfied in the dispensations of God, when he thinks it necessary to try his virtue, by very great and grievous adversities.

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And thou wilt not think this a hard saying, if thou considerest how much harder it will be to endure the torments of hell, and the implacable vengeance of an angry God. Nature, as well as religion, teaches men of two evils to chuse the less; and this they do, when they compose themselves submissively to undergo tribulation here, for the sake of God and a good conscience; that they may, by such patient suffering, deliver themselves from the dreadful effects of his wrath, and ever-enduring punishment hereafter.

Now tribulation is a portion distributed in common to all the sons of men; and is given in large measures, even to those whom thou perhaps vainly imaginest to be most exempted from it. For, even such of them as seem to thee the most gay and prosperous, are not without their many and sore evils. They take, it is true, a great deal of pleasure, indulge their inclinations in their full swing, and so their misery makes a less sensible impression upon their spirits; but miseries they have. Or, put their case in the best light, and suppose their joys to be without any interruption, their wishes without any disappointment; Yet, even thus, how long would their happiness last? Alas, they vanish like a dream, and all their prosperity soon scatters like smoke; and not only their enjoyments themselves, but the very remembrance of them are soon lost in oblivion. Their life is but a vapour; and death will be sure speedily to swallow up both them and their gayeties.

But this is putting the case more favourably than it really ever happens: For, even in this life their plenty and pleasures are chequered with misfortunes, and all their sweets allayed with a bitter mixture of cares and fears, and inward perplexities

of heart. Those very objects which minister pleasure, are accompanied with pain. And this is one great argument, how wise a providence governs the world, that the very inordinacy of those affections, which so eagerly pursue the pleasures of sense, should prove a torment to the guilty mind, and lessen those very pleasures they indulge. These very pleasures too are short and fleeting, treacherous and deceitful, irregular and exorbitant, a shame and blemish to human nature; and, if men are not sensible of this, their ignorance must proceed from their own inadvertency. Their reason is drowned in present delights, and their minds blinded by vicious habits, by which they degenerate into brutes, stupidly give themselves up to the transitory pleasures of sin and lust, tho' everlasting pains are the sure consequence of such a proceeding; and consult the present gratification of a vile sensual appetite with the ruin of a precious and immortal soul.

Do not thou therefore practice their excesses, nor place thy happiness in serving, but rather in commanding, subduing, denying, mortifying thy own inclinations. *Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall grant thee thy heart's desire.* Psal. xxxvii. For this delight will instruct thee, that the happiness of man consists in inward and spiritual satisfactions, in the contempt of this world and its empty gayeties. And the less these are in thy esteem and affection, the greater and more ravishingly sweet shall those generous and noble pleasures prove, which result from the experience of God's favour, and the substantial comforts of a good conscience.

But remember these comforts are not to be obtained, without much labour, many conflicts, and sharp sufferings. For the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood, and the confirmed habits of vice, will

will prove a continual obstruction, and require time and pains to conquer; nor will thy endeavours to that purpose be in vain, if thou wilt but put in practice the contrary habits of virtue. The flesh indeed will recoil, and think itself ill used; but reason and religion will silence those grumbings, and a resolute perseverance in good works will vanquish all thy reluctances. The subtle old serpent will be very importunate to seduce thee, but prayer and pious meditations will drive the evil spirit away; and fasting and holy exercise, or constant lawful business, will keep him at a distance. For he never enters so easily, so successfully; as when idleness sets open the door, and an empty heart makes room for his wicked suggestions and solicitations.

R E F L E X I O N.

PATIENCE is undoubtedly a virtue of singular use to a Christian in this state of warfare, while he continues cloathed with humanity, subject to mortality, and is encompas'd with innumerable evils of all kinds. By a right exercise of patience a man enjoys a calm in the midst of surrounding storms; he is in peace when all the world are at odds; tho' tortur'd with pain, afflicted with vexations and disappointments, oppressed by tyranny, and stript of all worldly comforts, yet he possesses his own soul, and enjoys a serenity of mind, that cannot be destroy'd, or even lessen'd by any thing that may befall the outward man. He is quiet and easy, while the envious and malicious are spending themselves in exerting all their rage and malice, to disturb his peace and to render his condition as miserable as they can. Whatever he

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suffers,

suffers, he considers it as the correction of a gracious Father, who punishes him for his good, and will lay no more upon him than he will enable him to bear. He considers that the afflictions and troubles of this present life are light and easy in comparison with the punishment that is due to him for his sins, and those everlasting torments that are reserved for the wicked, and such as know not God.

Some, perhaps, will say, hard is the fate of a Christian, if he must suffer for his professing a good conscience, when the declared enemies of God and goodness wallow in their pleasures, and enjoy every thing their hearts can wish. But, didst thou know the deadly stabs that a guilty conscience gives to the choicest of carnal delights; didst thou seriously reflect on the short duration of the most refined pleasures of the voluptuous worldling, thou wouldest be so far from envying the supposed happiness of his condition; that thou wouldest hugg thyself in the midst of all thy imaginary misery, and bless God for those afflictions which have brought thee to a knowledge of thyself, which have taught thee the vanity and emptiness of all earthly enjoyments, and instructed thee to place thy confidence in God alone.

But this happy temper, this agreeable disposition of the mind, is not to be obtained without a great conflict with thyself. It will cost thee many a pang to break the habits of sin, and to bid an eternal farewell to those delights which are so pleasing to sense: But when thou hast once done it, thou wilt find the loss of those abundantly recompenced by those heavenly consolations which shall delight thy soul, and beginning here, shall be perfected in heaven.

CHAP. XIV.

*CHRIST an Example of Obedience
to Superiors.**(Christ.)*

K NOW, my son, that he who refuses obedience, rejects the grace of God, and excludes himself from the divine favour; and, by aiming too much at his own private advantage, breaks the order, and obstructs the good of the publick. Disrespect and contumacy to superiors, is an infallible mark of a rebellious spirit, and of passions not brought in subjection to reason and religion. Submission therefore is of great use, for subduing the lusts of the flesh, and a good preservative against temptations. For the grand adversary will be more successfully opposed, when thy domestick enemy is first vanquished, and all is quiet within. And man's ownself is his own worst enemy; nor are his circumstances ever more full of danger, than when the sensitive appetite raises insurrections, and would dethrone the rational soul. And, if you desire to bring the inferior faculties to reason, an humble opinion of yourself is necessary; for partiality and pride are at the bottom of all the disorders in thy own breast, and all the disturbance given by unruly men to society, and good government, of all kinds.

And where is the mighty merit in this submission? What disparagement can it be thought to thee, who art dust and vileness, when thou considerest that I myself, the Almighty Majesty of heaven, and the Lord of all the universe; I,
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who created thee, and the whole world, out of nothing, did yet submit to a state of subjection, and appeared in the very lowest, most servile, and despicable form for thy sake, who art nothing? And why, but that after so eminent a pattern of humility thou mightest have no pretence for pride? Learn then, thou wretch, to humble thyself; and like that earth, of which thou art, be even content to be trampled upon, and trodden under foot: Lay thyself, like the streets, to the feet of insulting men, to walk over thee, and never rest till thou hast broken thy own perverse temper, and art in a continual readiness to comply with every just command over all who have authority over thee.

Till thou hast done this, turn this indignation against thy passions, and spare them not, till the very last remains of pride be absolutely suppressed and killed in thy heart. And if sometimes thou findest ill usage and tyrannical barbarity, yet still consider, thou art but a man, and ought'st not to complain; nay, rather consider, that thou art a sinner, justly liable to the pains of hell and eternal fire; and let the anger of an offended God, which strictly is thy portion and desert, master thy resentments of the insolence and injuries, the reproachful treatment, and unjustifiable hardships, which men may sometimes offer to thee. This wrath of God thou hast provoked, but my mercy has spared thee; I had compassion on thy soul, and by my own Blood I ransomed it from death. And canst thou think, that no return is due for such mercy? Surely there is; and know that I require thou should'st be sensible of the astonishing greatness of my love, and shew that sense by gratitude and humility, by a modest and respectful observance of my ministers who represent me here below; and
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by not disdaining to suffer any shame and contempt, any injustice and barbarity, when providence and duty call thee to it, which I, thy Master and thy God, did not think much to undergo for thy sake, whilst I conversed in human flesh upon earth.

R E F L E X I O N.

THE rules of society require a subordination of persons, and a dutiful respect and subjection to publick authority; which whoever fancies he is exempted from, by any exemption or liberty granted or allow'd by Christ, belies his religion, and throws an odium on the founder of it. For Christ himself, tho' the original and fountain of all power, to whom all reverence and adoration is due, at whose Name every knee shall bow, even he became subject to earthly powers, pay'd exact obedience to human laws, and tho' the worst used of any man by governors, yet quietly submitted to their authority, patiently suffer'd their unjust and cruel treatment; and tho' by a word, or a single act of his will, he could have laid them breathless at his feet, yet such was his regard to the authority of a magistrate and the dignity of government, that he rather chose to manifest the justice of his cause and the innocence of his conduct, by the extraordinary circumstances that attended his trial and sufferings, than to stop the usual course of justice by the immediate acts of his omnipotent power.

If such then was the humility and condescension of the Redeemer of the world, by whom the world itself was made, shall poor mortal man be guilty of so much pride and arrogance, as to imagine himself without a superior, or believe he is under no oblige-

obligations of obedience to the higher powers? Consider, frail mortal, what thou art; look within and without thyself; take an exact survey of thy own woeful condition; and then bethink thyself whether humility, submission and obedience do not much better become thee than a supercilious vanity in assuming to thyself privileges and prerogatives to which no created being can pretend a right, namely, of being exempted from homage and subjection to superiors; for even governors themselves are accountable both to God and man for their behaviour in their office; and the angels pay a ready obedience to the commands of their Almighty Sovereign. Let us then patiently endure the persecutions and cruelties of wicked men, since we have so great a pattern set before us for our imitation, namely, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, for our sakes, gave himself a willing sacrifice, and submitted to the power of cruel and merciless men, to redeem us from the wrath of an angry God.

C H A P. XV.

God's Judgments should teach us Humiliation.

(*Disciple.*)

WHEN thou, Lord, utterest thy voice in judgments, my joints are loosed, my limbs quake for fear, my very soul is confounded, and trembles at thy thunder. In the midst of these horrors I begin to consider, that the *heavens themselves are not pure in thy sight*, and that even the
angels

angels thou hast charged with folly. Job xxv. If then those exalted intellectual spirits could not stand before thee, nor were able to keep their first estate, What must become of such a wretch as I am? If even the stars fell from the firmament, what then must become of sinful dust and ashes? They, who did eat angel's food, degenerated from their primitive excellence, and fed on husks with swine; how then should a creature preserve its innocence, whose very original is impure?

This, Lord, is an evident proof, that there is no holiness, but what is derived from thee alone; no wisdom without thy direction; no strength a sufficient defence, if thou withdraw thy gracious protection; no continence or abstemiousness effectual, except thou guard it; no watchfulness against the enemy available, unless thy wakeful eyes keep all our approaches, and repulse the assaults of the tempter. If thou forbear to support us with thy mighty hand, the waves will overwhelm us; we sink and perish without thee; but if thou lendest thy hand, we walk upon the sea in safety: Weak and unstable are our resolutions, but thy grace gives strength and perseverance. Cold and timorous are our hearts, but thou warmest them with zeal, and inspirest them with courage. *Lift up then, Lord, our hands that hang down, and our feeble knees, that we faint not in this spiritual warfare;* and enable those who can do nothing without thee, to subdue all difficulties through thy strength assisting them.

I know, O LORD, that if any good thing seem to be in me, yet even this deserves my meanest opinion, and will by no means justify my thinking better of my self, than as a most vile and worthless wretch. And therefore, when thy an-

gry justice afflicts me, it is my duty, with the profoundest reverence and submission, to humble my self in dust and ashes, and meekly submit to thy correcting hand. For, though I cannot comprehend all the reasons of thy mysterious judgments; yet this I can easily discern, that I my self am nothing, and that I proceed out of nothing. O the dark abyss! in which I can find nothing relating to my self, but vanity and nothing. Where then is the presumption, where the pride, the vain-glorious conceit of my worth and virtue? Whither are all my vain confidences, and trowning imaginations fled? Thy judgments, LORD, have swept them away like a torrent; and all are sunk in those unsearchable depths. These shew me to myself, and justify the Prophet's rebuke, *Shall the clay exalt itself against the potter that fashioned it? Behold, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, so is every mortal man in thy hand, O Lord.* Isa. xiv. Jer. xviii.

How is it possible then for that soul to swell with insolence and vain conceit, which is duly sensible of thy Majesty, and submits to it, with that lowliness and resigned submission which thy truth directs? No, no, Not the united voice of all mankind, conspiring unanimously in his praise, can blow him up to fond conceits of his own excellence, when once his hopes and heart are fixed on God. For he considers, that all these are but so many copies of himself; frail and feeble, deceivable and perishing, emptiness and nothing. That they, as well as their words, are mere air and sound, and both will soon vanish together; but God and his truth remain for ever-more. *Cease therefore from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Isa. xi. and endeavour to have praise
of

of him, *who resisteth the proud, but in his own due time exalteth them who humble themselves under his mighty hand.* 1 Pet. iv.

REFLEXION.

PRIDE but ill-becomes such a poor wretched dependant creature as man is. What is it he has to be proud of? Is it of his reason, by which he is so eminently distinguished from the animal and brute creation? Behold, the devils possess that faculty in a degree vastly superior to him. Is he proud of his beauty and comely personage? Sickness soon changes the most beauteous form, and death reduces it to a loathsome spectacle. Whoever entertains fond conceits of his own merits, and superior excellence, let him read the 38th and following chapters of *Job*, and then boast of his comprehensive knowledge, and the extensive reach of his genius and understanding.

But supposing thou makest a little figure among the rest of thy fellow-mortals, what art thou when set in comparison with the supreme of all Beings, the Almighty God, the infinitely holy, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, all-wise Creator and Governor of the world? What canst thou call thyself better than nothing, less than nothing, and altogether vanity? What canst thou find in thyself to recommend thee to his notice, or to merit his regard? Can the pure eyes of his holiness, thinkest thou, be pleased with such a sinful polluted creature as thou art? Canst thou conceive any hope from that mercy which thou hast so often abused? Hast thou not every thing to fear from that Justice which thou hast so often provoked? O humble thyself in dust and ashes

under a sense of thy own vileness and wretchedness; and consider how dangerous thy condition is, how dreadful it must ever be, if thou shouldst build thy future happiness upon thy present merits, or believe thou hast any other title to heaven, than what was purchased by the meritorious death and suffering of the Son of God; an interest in which thou canst obtain no otherwise but by a sincere repentance for thy former transgressions, by renouncing all worthiness and merit of thy own, by disclaiming all pretences to happiness from good works, and by relying entirely on the merit and satisfaction which the crucified Jesus has made, and the atonement he has wrought to pacify the justice of an offended God.

CHAP. XVI.

Let thy prayers be modestly preferr'd.

(Christ.)

LET this, my son, be the language and style of all thy prayers: *Lord, if it be thy good pleasure, grant me this request; If what I ask be to thy glory, do thou be pleased to give and prosper it: Lord, if thou, to whom all things and their consequences are perfectly known, seest that this will be for my real advantage, not only bestow it, but, with it, grace to use it to thy glory: But if thou knowest it may prove hurtful to me, deny not only my petitions, which proceed from ignorance and mistake; but remove far from me the very desire of that,*

that, which cannot be obtained without my prejudice.

This last is a very reasonable and suitable request ; because many desires, which seem not only innocent, but even consistent with virtue and prudence, profitable and praise-worthy, to human apprehension, are yet neither inspired by God, nor agreeable to his will : And indeed it is not easy to discern, whether one be acted by a good or evil spirit ; or whether, in the matter of his prayers, he is not determin'd by his own inclination and private respects. And many a one, who hath fancied he felt the impulse of divine grace, and persuaded himself, that he hath been directed and acted by it all along, finds the delusion out at last : And what he imputed to the Spirit of God, proves in the end a suggestion of the devil, or the fond longings of his own vain mind.

If then thou wouldest be sure never to offend God in thy desires, and that thy addresses should be acceptable to him, temper all thy inclinations with his fear, and indulge not so much as a secret wish, without such reservations, as may testify an entire submission to the divine disposal. And when those wishes break out into words, men will do well to conceive and present them in such forms, as may express some check upon themselves, and great caution in restraining their tongues from asking any thing in a peremptory manner ; but leaving the matter entirely to God's better choice. As thus ; *" Lord, thou knowest whether the having, or the being denied the matter of my petition, be most convenient ; and therefore all I beg is, that what thou seest most expedient, may be done ; I ask indeed, as it is my duty, but I presume not to prescribe to thy infinite wisdom. Give me*
" there-

“ therefore, Lord, such things, and in such mea-
“ fures, and at such times, as thou seeft moft con-
“ venient. Deal with me as thou knoweft it is
“ moft fit : For that I am fatisfied is beft for me,
“ which is moft agreeable to thy will, and moft
“ conducive to thy glory. Affign me to any poft,
“ and ufe me as thy own ; turn and change me,
“ and my fortune, at thy pleasure : I only beg to
“ be qualified for thy difpenfations, to ufe them
“ rightly, and greatly to improve myfelf under
“ them. For I am thy fervant, devoted to thee
“ without the leaft referve : I would not to live to
“ myfelf, but to thee ; Oh ! that I might be ena-
“ bled faithfully and worthily to perform that ho-
“ mage and duty, to all which my heart is moft
“ freely and fincerely difpofed and inclined.

R E F L E X I O N.

So weak and fhort-fighted is man, fo little acquainted is he with his own real wants, that he often defires things, which, if granted him, would prove his ruin and deftruction. Every one is apt to think, health, wealth, and profperity would be the only things that can make him happy, when, alas ! thefe are the very things that generally contribute moft to his ruin. A continual freedom from pain and ficknefs is apt to leffen in him that pity and commiferation which is due to thofe that labour under the infirmities of the body ; and thus one eminent virtue, at leaft, namely, charity, is much diminifh'd, if not totally loft, in the pride and infolence of an uninterrupted health and vigour. Wealth without loffes, and fuccesses without difappointments, too often lift us above ourfelves, makes us fancy that thefe bleffings are due
to

to our superior merit, and render us forgetful of our great Benefactor, at whose only pleasure we breathe, and enjoy any one comfort of life. Prosperity in this world, too often leads us to an entire neglect of that heavenly country, which either must be our eternal inheritance hereafter, or everlasting misery be our dreadful portion.

How fearful then should these considerations make us, lest what we enjoy of the comforts and blessings of this life be not given in mercy to us, but rather to aggravate our guilt and punishment at the last day? Therefore in all our requests and petitions to God, let us beseech him that he will bestow on us no more of the good things of this life, than he will give us grace to improve to his honour and glory, and the true interest and welfare of our own souls. In all our prayers and approaches to the throne of grace, let us remember this submissive exception, Tho' I most earnestly entreat thee, to grant me these humble requests, as what, according to my poor apprehension, will greatly contribute to my happiness; yet, Lord, as thou knowest all things, and consequently best knowest what will make for thy honour and my real good, I desire them on no terms that shall be inconsistent with either; not my will, O Lord, but thine be done; I desire no happiness that does not comport with thy glory; I would not possess any thing at the expence of a good conscience; I would enjoy no pleasure with the loss of thy favour: Wherefore I submit myself entirely to thy direction; and as I am fully persuaded thou wilt order all things for my good, grant that all the dispensations of thy providence towards me, may work in me an humble mind, a perfect resignation to thy will, and an entire

tire reliance thy fatherly care and concern for me and mine.

CHAP. XVII.

A Prayer for Grace to do the Will of God.

(*Disciple.*)

“ **H**EAR me, most merciful Saviour, I most
“ humbly entreat thee, and let thy grace be
“ ever present with thy weak unworthy servant.
“ For of my self I am not able to do or think any
“ thing that is good. O! let thy Spirit assist my
“ poor endeavours, vanquish the temptations that
“ surround me on every side; fix my inconstant
“ mind, and follow me all the days of my life,
“ that I may persevere in good works unto the
“ end. Regulate my affections and desires, and
“ confine them to such objects only, as are agreea-
“ ble to thy will. Let thy will be the guide and
“ measure of mine, and let mine steadily conform
“ to thy pleasure. Remove far from me all incli-
“ nations and aversions, but such as agree with
“ those of the Blessed Jesus. Help me to die daily
“ to the world, and to the things thereof, and to
“ mortify my vanity, that even shame and con-
“ tempt for thy sake, may be not only supportable,
“ but welcome to me. Let all my hopes and
“ wishes center in thee alone; and nothing appear
“ desirable, in comparison of a pure heart and
“ peaceful conscience. For thou, O Lord, art my
“ peace, thou only my rest; in thee alone is plea-
sure

“ sure and true satisfaction, and all without thee is
“ misery and torment. Oh ! grant me this blessed
“ retreat, this happy security ; that I may forsake
“ all the false appearances of happiness here below,
“ and find soft ease and sweet repose in thy love
“ and favour, thou true, thou chief, thou eternal
“ Good of pious souls.

CHAP. XVIII.

In GOD is true Comfort.

(*Disciple.*)

WHATEVER comfort and happiness I propose to myself, this is not the time, nor is this world the place of enjoying them ; but I expect that blessed fruition in another state. For to what purpose would it be to attain the utmost delights this world can yield, when a very short space must necessarily put an end to them ? Do not then, my soul, mistake thy happiness ; for these things neither are, nor can be thy rest. The fulness of joy and undisturbed pleasure is no-where to be found, save in God alone : He is the Comforter of the afflicted, wealth of the poor, support and strength of the weak, the glory and reward of the humble.

Let it not then disturb thy peace, or discourage thy hope, that thou canst not yet attain to thy promised felicity. Remember, God is faithful and cannot lie. Only patiently wait his own time, and thou shalt not fail of his mercy, and an abundant recompence of thy faith and patient trust in due season. But if this delay abate thy affections to pre-

sent comforts, and weaken thy zeal for future and distant rewards, thou shalt desire earthly blessings, and not be filled; and at the same time shalt be deprived of those heavenly and eternal joys, which alone can satisfy, and make thee happy. Use then these temporal things, but *love* none but the things that are eternal. The present were not design'd to give thee a satisfactory enjoyment, but for necessity and convenience only. Thy nature was not formed for them, nor is it in their power to make thee perfect; no, not tho' all the temporal good that this mortal state is capable of, were united together for that purpose. For God alone is a good, large enough to fill the desires of an immortal soul; He only is proportion'd to thy wants and noble faculties; and the happiness to be found in him, is not that transitory, imperfect thing, which the men of this world fondly covet and admire; but that exquisite, that unspeakable and inward delight, of which the pure in heart, and such as are devoted to God, receive some sweet foretastes and pledges, by having their conversation in heaven, while they themselves are confin'd to frail mortal bodies. For man is vain, and all his comforts like him; empty and unsatisfactory, false and fleeting, swiftly decaying, and of short continuance: But those which proceed from God, resemble the perfections of their Author, spiritual and true, immutable and eternal. A soul truly pious can never be destitute, because he constantly carries his happiness about him, even the Blessed Jesus, the divine Comforter; and, when bereft of all besides, can thus converse with him in the profoundest solitude.

Blessed, O dearest Jesus, be thy mercy! Blessed be thy Name for thy cheering presence! O let me never be deprived of this invaluable happiness!

While

While I have this consolation within, I feel no want of earthly enjoyments: For this supplies, this exceeds them all. Oh! let me thankfully rejoice in thy favour, and the light of thy countenance lifted up upon me! Or, if it should please thee at any time to withdraw those bright beams, and interpose a cloud of sorrow; yet even then preserve me from sad distrust, and let the consideration that it is thy will, which is always the best, be my support and comfort in my blackest and most melancholy circumstances. O suffer me not to cast away my hope and confidence, because thou hidest thy face for a season; but help me to discern and rightly apply the great wisdom and benefit of such trying dispensations, to support my faith with the prospect of that reward, which is reserved in heaven for those upon whom patience hath its perfect work. For thou, O Lord, art gracious and merciful, and though we perpetually offend and provoke thee, yet wilt *thou not always be chiding, nor keep thy anger for ever*; Ps. ciii. but wilt turn again, and in much compassion quicken thy suffering servants, that at length they may rejoice in thee, and triumph over their calamities, to the praise and glory of thy great Name.

R E F L E X I O N.

HAPPINESS is the mark to which all mankind direct their aim; but the great misfortune is, most men shoot wide of it. Such a *Proteus* is it, that it varies its shape according to the complexion and constitution of the person who fancies he enjoys it. It is a sort of a phantom, which puts on a gay appearance; but when you would embrace it, it suddenly vanishes. The rich miser thinks he has

it in his numerous full bags; the gay voluptuary is sure he finds it in the indulgence of his sensual appetite, the finery of dress, and the splendor of equipage; the man of honour is sure there is no fitter objects to fix it on than titles and distinctions, the antiquity of his family, and the respect and devoirs paid to him by the admiring world. Nay, whatever passion predominates most in the heart of man, the gratification of that passion will be sure to yield him the greatest pleasure imaginable. Hence we find men so eager in the pursuit of that which happens to strike their prevailing humour most, be it for the worst and most enormous kind of vices.

But when a man has gratified his lusts to the utmost extent, he finds them, at best, but of short duration, accompanied with bitter reflexions on what is past, and terrible apprehensions of what is to come; and in the end, will have reason enough to say of them, as *Job* said of his friends, *Miserable comforters are ye all.*

God alone is the true object of happiness, the fountain of comfort and consolation to the afflicted, dejected, desponding soul; he alone can fill the desires of the most enlarged heart, heal the wounds of a bleeding conscience, and speak peace and pardon to a mind full of guilt and horror. No comfort is like that which proceeds from a sense of the pardon of sin; no peace comparable to that which arises from a consciousness that we are at peace with God; no satisfaction equal to that of knowing we have an interest in the love and intercession of the Blessed Jesus; no happiness so agreeable to the nature of an immortal soul, so fitted to a rational being, as those joys, and that state of bliss, which shall be the portion of Saints and Angels to all eternity. For which glorious and heavenly

venly mansions, do thou, most merciful Father, fit and prepare me; help me to make my calling and election sure, *that so an entrance may be ministered to me abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 Pet. i. 11.

CHAP. XIX.

Cast all thy Care upon G O D.

(Christ.)

MY son, be content, that I should dispose of thee and all thy affairs, as in my divine wisdom I may see fit; for I best know what is proper for thee. Thou judgest not rightly, and art liable to human frailties. Sense and present enjoyments blind thy eyes, and byass thy reason; but my children, who should walk by faith, and not by sight, must not be govern'd by the same measures, which the men of this world make use of, in distinguishing good and evil accidents.

(Disciple.) LORD, I freely confess my infirmity; and am sensible, that thy care and concern for me is more prudent, more affectionate, than that I have for my own self; and he hath made but small proficiency in the school of Christ, whose weak faith is still to learn that lesson of being satisfied with all thy dispensations, and casting his whole care upon thee. All therefore that I beg, is, that thou wouldest establish my heart in the way of thy commandments; and, so long as I depart not from truth and righteousness, secure my soul, and, for the

the rest I submit to thy pleasure: For thou art wise, and just, and good; and such, I am persuaded, are all the methods of thy providence; though human understandings may not distinctly perceive, nor be able to comprehend the reasons of them. If therefore thou condemn me to darkness and affliction, I will praise and thank thee for thy deserved correction, even in the midst of my trouble. Or, if thou spare the rod, and make my darkness to be light, I will then gratefully receive the blessing, and magnify the favour which it was not in power to deserve.

(*Christ.*) This is indeed, my son, the temper and behaviour suiting the character of my faithful children. And all, who profess to walk with me in piety and virtue, must bring themselves to a disposition of soul so even, so resign'd, that suffering and joy, poverty or riches, may be entertain'd alike. The one without murmuring or complaint, the other without the least arrogance or change of temper; For both are equally directed by my providence, and, as such, should be received with cheerfulness and resignation.

(*Disciple.*) LORD, I am willing to undergo whatever thou art pleased to lay upon me. I desire no other but to receive good and evil, the sweet and bitter, the comforts and the crosses of this life, with the very same temper of mind. Nay, not only to receive, but to be thankful for both, since both are the effects of thy good pleasure, which cannot err in ordering all events relating to me. This only I beseech thee, that, in all changes of condition, thou would'st in thy mercy preserve me from sin: For, so long as I preserve my innocence, and continue in thy love, no calamity, no death, nor hell itself, shall make me afraid. However
thou

thou may'st exercise my patience, or frown upon me at present; yet if thou dost not cast me off for ever, nor blot my name out of thy book of life, I will fear no danger; being assured that the utmost powers, and malice of fortune, and enemies, and devils combined together, can never hurt me.

R E F L E X I O N.

RESIGNATION to the will of GOD, is a duty incumbent on every one who professes the Name of Christ. *Shall we receive good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* says the holy Job chap. ii. 10. Shall we poor wretched mortals, creeping worms, who are but dust and ashes, give laws to our supreme Lord and governor, or be so presumptuous as to imagine that we can oblige him always to bless and favour us, and never to afflict us? And shall not those great and manifold, those constant and continued mercies, which, from time to time, thro' the whole course of our lives, God hath graciously and freely given us, compensate for these short afflictions? Ought we not to bless God for those mercies which we did not deserve, and contentedly bear those corrections which we justly suffer, and, indeed, stand in need of, and if it be not our own fault, may improve to our own great advantage?

Let us seriously reflect, that God can, and does, take more care of us, than we can take of ourselves. If not a sparrow is exempted from the care of his providence, why should a Christian, who may without offence, claim a larger share in its protection, think he alone, of all creatures living, should be destitute of it? The consideration of the divine care, and gracious providence over
us,

us, should antidote our spirits against all distrustful fears whatsoever; it should fortify us against all distracting cares, and anxious sollicitudes, about our worldly concerns.

Poverty and want have been the lot of the best of men; affliction and distress have been plentifully dealt out to the chiefest of Saints; even the Blessed Jesus himself had not only a taste, but a full draught of the bitter cup; and shall we pretend to claim an exemption from it? Let us rather submissively and thankfully receive whatever it shall please God to deal out unto us; instead of murmuring that we have so little of the comforts of this life, let us rather admire that we have had so much more than we have really deserved.

CHAP. XX.

CHRIST our Pattern of Patience.

(*Christ.*)

MY son, remember that I left heaven for no other reason but for thy salvation; I suffer'd the punishment due to thee, and sustained all the miseries, to which human nature is exposed. I bore them, not by constraint, but choice, being under no obligation, but that which powerful love imposed upon me. And one great end, for which I condescended so to do, was to teach thee patience by my example; and, that my willing sufferings might dispose thee to submit to the necessary incumbrances of thy present condition, without reluctance

luctance and murmuring. Sorrow was my familiar companion; my constant attendant from the manger to the cross; for every hour produced some fresh instance of it. My circumstances were low, and I was contented even in the want of the necessities of life; my innocence was slandered, and contempt and reproaches were daily sounding in my ears; shame and disrespect I entertain'd without return or angry resentment; my good deeds were repaid with malice and ingratitude; my miracles blasphemed, and my doctrine traduced and scandalously misrepresented.

(*Disciple.*) Yes, Lord, I peruse the history of thy invincible meekness with wonder and astonishment; and cannot but conclude from thence, that, since thou wert pleased to give such amazing proofs of an entire obedience to thy heavenly Father's will; I, who am a wretched sinner, and not only subject to these miseries by the condition of my nature, but one, who have deserved them as chastisements for my transgressions, am much more oblig'd, with a most perfect submission, to be satisfied with whatever thy providence thinks fit to inflict; and must by no means think much of the weight, or the continuance of any burthen thou shalt lay upon me in the present world. If any thing here seem heavy, yet it becomes much lighter and more supportable by the assistance of thy grace, by the contemplation of thy example, and the many patterns of constancy and virtue, which thy now glorified Saints, but once afflicted servants, who travelled the same rugged journey of life, have in all ages set for my imitation and encouragement. I plainly see, under this Gospel-state, a mighty support, which even thy own peculiar people were destitute of under the Old Law. For then the way to heaven was dark, and

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the prospect at their journey's end less glorious and inviting. Few then applied themselves with zeal to seek a future and spiritual kingdom; nor had they equal encouragement so to do, till thy meritorious death had opened an entrance into the high and holy place. But how contentedly, how thankfully does it become me, to tread in thy blessed steps, being sustained by the assurance of eternal rewards, and directed in the right way by the light of thy doctrine? For thou *art the way, the truth, and the life*; John xiv. thy afflictions have taught me, and all believers, that tribulation is the passage to thy heavenly kingdom; and that the proper method of obtaining a crown of glory, is being made a partaker of thy cross. Had'st thou not gone before us, who would have had courage enough to follow? Who could persevere in a course of sufferings? Nay, though thou hast thus shewed us the way, yet how loth, how unwilling are we to follow it? And, if neither thy miracles, nor thy precepts, thy wondrous humiliation, nor thy glorious exaltation, can warm us into greater zeal and resolution, than by sad experience we daily see and feel they do; How wretchedly slothful, alas! how cold, and motionless should we have stood, had not thy grace and marvellous condescension vouchsafed to grant us the advantage of so clear a light, and the powerful motive of so bright an example?

R E F L E X I O N.

LET us a little contemplate the infinite condescension of Christ, the humiliation he submitted to, the sufferings he underwent, together with the cause of all this; and then seriously consider, whether we have not all the reason imaginable, cheerfully

fully to bear the most afflictive dispensations of providence towards us. *Great is the mystery of Godliness*, says St. Paul, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *God was manifested in the flesh*. Which Mr. Borkitt thus paraphrases; “ Astonishing Mystery! that the Creator
“ of the world should become a creature, lodg’d in
“ a stable, and cradled in a manger! The infinite
“ Deity and finite flesh met in one person, and yet
“ the Godhead not humanized, nor the Humanity
“ deified, but both visibly conjoined; the human
“ nature was united to the Godhead miraculously,
“ assumed integrally, united inseparably.

The same Author, speaking of Christ’s last sufferings, has this pathetic exclamation; “ But
“ why was the precious body of our Blessed LORD
“ thus galled and torn with scourgings? Doubtless
“ to fulfil that prophecy, *I gave my back to the
“ smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off
“ the hair; that by his stripes we might be healed.*
“ And to learn us patience from his example: Why
“ should we think it strange to be scourged either
“ with the tongue, or hand, or with both, when
“ we see our dear Redeemer bleeding by stripes
“ and scourges before our eyes?

Little reason then have we to complain of the cruel treatment we may meet with from the hands of wicked men, since, let our sufferings be ever so great, the torments in our flesh ever so intense or exquisite, or the sense of God’s anger ever so deeply impress’d on our minds; none of these are comparable to the bloody passion of our dear Redeemer, and the intenseness of his grief, under a sense of divine desertion in his last moments, which made him cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Let us set the glorious pattern of Christ before

us in all our sufferings, *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatned not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously,* 1 Pet. ii. 23. Blessed JESUS, help us to imitate thy patience under sufferings and reproaches, and let us never be found rendring to any evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing for cursing, courtesies for injuries, affability for affronts; let us at no time be overcome of evil, but labour at all times to overcome evil with good.

CHAP. XXI.

How to judge of true Patience.

(*Christ.*)

FOrbear thy complaints, my son, and, when thou art threatned with afflictions, call to mind what I endured for thy sake; and not only what I suffer'd for thee, but what so many brave and generous Saints have since courageously endured for me. Alas! thy trials are yet but small, thou hast not yet resisted unto blood, as I and they have done. Their difficulties were greater, their temptations sharper, their sorrows more piercing, their exercises more severe; and yet in all these they were more than conquerors. It will therefore greatly contribute to the confirming thy hope and patience, if thou carefully compare thy very light with their much heavier burthen; thou wilt then reproach thyself for sinking under a weight, which they would scarce have felt. But, if thy own load seem

seem so unsupportable, and thou canst scarce be brought to think the case of others so much more deplorable than thy own; consider, whether this error of thine do not proceed from partial affection, tenderness to thyself, and a fretful impatience, rather than from the true nature and reason of the thing; for by these mens judgments are they corrupted, and are taught to see their own and other peoples circumstances with very different eyes. But be thy ideas true or erroneous, yet still the greater and the less calamities call equally for submission and constancy. And it is not the degree or measure, but the author and the consequence of suffering, which is the proper motive to patience.

Now the more quiet and composed thou art under any trouble, the more commendable is thy wisdom, and the greater will be thy recompence; Nay, not only so, but the easier will be thy lot too. For consideration will reconcile thee to it, and time and experience make the thing familiar. It is no great matter, who are the immediate instruments, or from what next hand thy afflictions come. For those are very trifling pretences, with which men usually labour to cover their want of temper: "Had I been thus used by an enemy or a stranger, "I could have born it; but from a friend, a relation, one whom I have highly obliged, and have "a right to expect better usage from, what flesh "can brook such baseness and ingratitude? Had "there been any just grounds for that slanderous "report, it would never have vex'd me; but to be "scandaliz'd and abus'd, without any reason, without the least fault or provocation of mine, it "must be allow'd to be very hard: The thing itself I could away with; but the person or the "particular circumstances, put me out of all patience."

“ tience.” Alas ! these are nice and frivolous distinctions ; such as are altogether foreign and impertinent to the matter in hand ; and in which the virtue of patience has no manner of concern. For patience takes injuries and affronts by the great, without entering into any particular examination of their nature and quality, and peculiar aggravations ; nor does it at all mind the person by whom it is exercised ; but considers that person only for whom we suffer, and by whom our patience shall be crowned.

No man hath yet arrived to a due perfection in this grace, who cannot contentedly undergo any kind of trial, from any hand whatsoever. The differences of friend or foe, of superior, inferior, or equal ; of a good-natur’d and conscientious, or a wicked, perverse, vexatious man, are of no account at all. But, let the provocation be what it will, and come from whom it will, let it be offered but once, or never so often repeated, ’tis all alike ; because in all the over-ruling Hand of God is to be attended to ; and every thing should be received, as ordained and originally inflicted by him ; and what proceeds from him is always good, and sure to turn to our advantage. And, as nothing he appoints, tho’ seemingly never so grievous, shall be to the disadvantage of good men ; so nothing, tho’ never so slight and despicable in itself, when dutifully and decently entertained, shall be forgotten or go unrewarded. Arm thyself therefore for the conflict, and decline no occasion of engaging that offers, if thou desire the glory of the conquest. Without fighting thy way through, there is no coming at the crown ; and they, who refuse to suffer with Christ, do in effect, and by necessary consequence refuse

to reign with him. Stand up then resolutely to encounter afflictions, and quit thyself like a man; repose and happiness is what thou desirest, but these thou canst only obtain by labour. Victory and triumph are the things thou aimest at: But surely thou canst not be so absurd, as to think of gaining triumphs, without enemies and hardships, or of conquering without a battel?

(*Disciple.*) I acquiesce, dear LORD, in all thou say'st; nor will I any longer indulge such vain imaginations. But since even where the spirit is most willing, the flesh is miserably weak; assist me, I beseech thee, that by the assistance of thy power and strength I may be able to do, what of myself I cannot accomplish, and nature is averse from so much as attempting. Thou knowest full well, how little I can bear; how every shock makes my feeble heart give ground; LORD, do thou strengthen and confirm me, that tribulation may appear, not only tolerable, but even desirable, in compliance with thy will and my duty. For, how reluctant soever human nature may be to this work, when danger approaches; in my own better judgment, which considers things in the christian and spiritual sense, I am abundantly satisfied, how much the rougher dispensations of thy providence conduce to the advantage of my soul. And, tho' *no chastisement for the present seems joyous, but grievous*, yet my better sense, when I think freely, convinces me of thy wisdom and mercy, and that it is *even good for me to be afflicted*.

R E F L E X I O N.

IT is no small alleviation of an affliction, to consider, that others have suffer'd sharper trials than those we are exercised with. Example is an excellent instructor; and virtue is never safer than when fortified by auxiliaries fetch'd from that glorious army of Martyrs, who have travell'd the thorny road of affliction and adversity, and are now singing songs of triumph for the victory they have obtain'd over the world, the flesh, and the devil, over every person and thing that oppos'd itself to the arms of their faith, hope, constancy and perseverance. What was it that enabled them to defy the rage of tyrants, to smile in the midst of the most exquisite tortures, to enjoy a calm and tranquil mind when their bodies were roasting in flaming fire; what, but a consciousness that they were then glorifying God, doing the duties of their profession as Christians, and working out a way to their eternal happiness?

What can we pretend to have suffer'd in comparison with those glorious confessors? Suppose we should endure sometimes a little oppression from the hand of wicked men, or become the scorn and contempt of the world, because we make a conscience of our duty, durst not profane the Name of our God, or make a jest of religion; suppose all this, and much more, consider how sad thy condition had now been, if the Blessed JESUS had not suffer'd infinitely more than all the sufferings of his Saints put together. Consider again how bravely the children of God, in all ages, have bravely bore up against affliction, and sustained



*The followers of Christ must deny themselves
& take up their Cross. Luke 9. 23.*



rained the most violent shocks of fortune, with a steadiness and constancy that have struck even their enemies with admiration. Thou hast, or may'st have the same supports as they had; their God is thy Father and Protector; their Comforter was promis'd to all the sincere followers of Christ; their Redeemer is ours, *neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* Acts iv. 12.

CHAP. XXII.

Infirmities and Miseries the Lot of Man.

(Disciple.)

I Will confess my unrighteousness unto the LORD, Ps. xxxii. and bewail my infirmities before him.

For every trifling accident casts me down, and I am often overwhelm'd with sorrow, upon occasions which my calmer thoughts thoroughly convince me, deserve rather my contempt, than my serious concern. Sometimes I see and condemn my own folly; and then I make mighty resolutions, how bravely I will behave myself for the time to come; and yet, upon the next assault of some petty misfortune, all my resolutions are beaten down, and I cannot withstand the shock of a very common disaster. The meanest and most contemptible things are, I find, capable of becoming great and dangerous temptations; and I, who at a distance, bid them defiance yet, when brought to the trial, I

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feel,

feel, by sad experience, upon how slippery ground I stand.

This is indeed the wretched condition of thy frail unstable servant: But, LORD, do thou, in much compassion, look upon my frailty, for thou art better acquainted with it than I myself am. Stretch forth thy hand, and draw me out of these deep waters, and out of this mire of sin and pollution, that I be not overwhelmed in my corruption. I cannot easily express the sorrowful reflections, the shame and confusion, the indignation and sad perplexity of heart, which the consciousness of my own inability to resist temptations, and the inconstancy of my best and most resolute purposes give me; and, tho' my will be not always subdued, nor do I (blessed be God) yield to every wiced suggestion; yet the repeated assaults of the enemy disturb my quiet, and I am weary of a life, which is subject to continual hazard, and painful conflicts with myself. The wretchedness of my condition is but too evident: I need no other argument to prove it, than the readiness I find in myself to give place to evil thoughts; which, in despite of my most watchful care, and most vigorous struggles, are much sooner insinuated, and received, than either driven out again, or prevented from entering.

Look down then, Almighty and most gracious God, and lover of souls, and send me thy kindly aid and protection; Give seasonable succour, and happy success to my too fruitless endeavours. Arm and guard me with strength from above; and suffer not the old man, the corrupt inclinations of my flesh, which I find very difficult entirely to subdue and bring to reason, let them not usurp the dominion over my better part. For this obstinate rebel, the flesh, renews its insurrections daily, and bids
me

me battel ; calls me to combats and hazardous engagements, which must never, never end in perfect peace and safety, so long as this miserable state of mortality lasts. Most miserable indeed it is, since every action and occurrence of my life involves me in fresh dangers ; since every step I take is upon snares and precipices ; since at all times, and in all places, I am continually beset with troubles and toils, with treachery and temptation, and a numerous host of enemies ready to devour and swallow me up. For a perpetual succession of shocking trials every moment renew their attacks ; and when I have happily vanquish'd many, and fondly promise myself a little freedom, I am immediately encounter'd by as many more, which make fiercer and more furious attempts upon some other quarter, which I hoped had been sufficiently guarded against their approaches.

And can a life, always liable to such surprize and hazards, embittered with so many troubles and severe trials, incumbred with so much frailty and corruption, be prized or mightily coveted ? Nay, can that deserve the very name of life, which naturally breeds plagues and diseases, and exposes us to such variety of deaths ? Yet, thoughtless man hugs, embraces, and values it as his only happiness ; foolishly expects ease in the midst of distraction, pursues joys in a valley of tears, and vainly and stupidly sets up for the boasted perfection of pleasure, in a condition of unavoidable misery, and lingering, certain pain. Sometimes, indeed, the extremity of some afflictions cuts us to the quick, and in our melancholy moods, we give the world hard words ; call it *deceitful*, *treacherous*, *vain* ; but even they who most liberally rail at it, and profess to hate and despise it, cannot be per-

suaded contentedly to leave it. The flesh and its affections have still a powerful influence, and urge men on to the pursuit and love of those very enjoyments, which reason and their own experience have taught them, are not worth their regard, nor can in any degree answer their deluded expectations. For we must observe, that our love and hatred of this world proceed from very different causes and principles. *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,* 1 John iii. engage our affections; and these are ever present with, and always pressing upon us. The calamities and griefs, and pains we feel, provoke our hatred and contempt, and make life appear a burden and misery; and these have their intervals, and work upon us weakly and by fits. The former too aptly agree with our inclination, and are assisted by nature; the latter have no influence upon us, but what their own weight gives; all their impressions are forcible and violent, heavy and painful, and such as we submit to, only because it is not in our power to help it.

Thus sense and sinful pleasure get possession of us, and, which is truly lamentable, get the better of our reason. The present gratifications of sense cheat the mind, and vitiate our palates to that degree, that, being prepossessed with a false taste of worldly sweets, we have no relish left for that delightful entertainment, with which God and religion feed and feast the pure and heavenly-minded soul. For, O! those happy men, who have learnt to despise and relinquish earthly things, and consecrated themselves entirely to God, by mortification, self-denial, and a steady course of severe virtue; these exalted spirits know and experience the truth of God and his promises, find unspeakable charms and

and sensible pleasure in the voluntary refusal of those toys and baits, the possession of which affords no real satisfaction, nor can be coveted with safety. They see, despise, and pity the folly of mankind, so egregiously abused ; discover the lurking frauds of the tempter ; and plainly see that the imagined happiness and boasted pleasures of sensual and earthly men, are only snares and dangers, vanity and cheat.

R E F L E X I O N.

W E A K and impotent are all our endeavours against sin, and the corruptions of our own hearts, without the assistance of divine grace. Every Christian may experimentally say, with *St. Paul*, *Rom. vii. 18.* *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing ; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.* That is, says the pious *Mr. Burkitt*, in my corrupt and unregenerate nature there is nothing truly and spiritually good ; and this I myself am sensible of, privy to, and very well acquainted with. Good men (says he) are intimately acquainted with themselves, privy to their own corruption, sensible of the indwelling presence of sin in themselves, which calls upon them to be humble, and excites them to be watchful.

To will is present with me. Tho' to will that which is good, is ready and at hand with God's regenerated children, yet through that corruption which still abides in them, they are sometimes disabled for doing that good which they propose, design, and desire to do ; and that little good they do, is very brokenly and imperfectly done. A mortal father may as soon get an immortal child, as an im-

imperfect saint can perform any thing perfectly good; there can never be more in the effect than there is in the cause. A weak grape cannot make strong wine. Whilst we are Saints on earth, tho' we may and ought to aspire after, yet we shall not be able to attain unto the sinless perfection of the saints in heaven. A real Christian is one that is continually labouring after the attainment of that which he knows in this life, he shall never attain unto; namely, perfection in grace. In heaven we shall have no occasion to complain, that *how to perform that which is good we find not.*

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord—
The happy hour is at hand, when we shall be everlastingly freed from the indwelling presence of sin, from all temptations to it, from all inclinations to offend, yea, from all possibility of sinning, when we shall obey God with vigour, praise him with cheerfulness, love him without measure, fear him without torment, trust in him without despondency, serve him without weariness, interruption, or distraction, being perfectly like unto God, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as immortality.

CHAP. XXIII.

*All our Hope and Happiness to be placed
in GOD.*

(Disciple.)

Rest thyself, my soul, in God, upon all occasions, and make him thy only dependance; for he is the only sure refuge, the eternal rest of the

the saints. Grant me thy grace, O sweetest, kindest Saviour, to esteem, and love, and trust in thee, above all things. Make me to prize thee infinitely above health and beauty, to desire thee more than honour and preferment, more than wealth and greatness, more than wit and learning; to rejoice in thee more than in temporal pleasure and prosperity, more than in the largest promises, the highest deserts, the most elevated gifts, the most transporting joys, which thou canst impart, or my heart when most enlarged, is able to receive. Let me admire thee above angels, and arch-angels, and all the host of heaven; above all things visible and invisible, more than all that is, or can be, which is not thy own self.

For thou, O my God, art the best and most excellent Being; In thee alone can we find plenty and fulness, sweet refreshment, peaceful comfort, and ravishing delights; the perfection of beauty and charming graces; true honour, and adorable Majesty: In thee, as in its proper center, all good meets, and dwells, and ever did, doth, and will continue to abide, from, and to all eternity. Give then, O blessed Jesus, give thy self; for all thou givest, and all thou promisest to give besides, is poor and little, when compared with the sight and fruition of thy most amiable and lovely Self. And by long experience, I have found that all thy other favours, nay, all nature is too short and narrow to satisfy my soul; whose unbounded desires exalt and stretch themselves far beyond all present enjoyments, and can be filled, and rest satisfied, with nothing short of thee.

O my beloved Lord, Sovereign of the universe, draw me to thyself with the cords of an entire and holy

holy affection. Set me at liberty from this clog of earth, and give me wings of fervent zeal, and pure devotion, that I may soar aloft, and take my flight higher than heaven itself; and find my rest in thee. Oh! when shall I see that happy time come, when I shall be set at liberty from sin and corruption, from the flesh and the world, and without interruption, without allay, taste and feast upon the sweetness of my God? When will the necessary cares and fatigues of this life cease to distract me, when will they leave me power and leisure to indulge those longings and pleasures, which refined and unbodied spirits feel; when swallowed up in the contemplation of thy divine excellencies, and even raised above themselves, they know and love, and retire wholly into thee? At present I feel myself oppressed with a load of infirmities and corruptions, and often groan under the sense of my heavy burthen. The inward joys, with which I am supported by thy grace, are mingled and allay'd with pains and tears; which cloud, and darken, and deject my mind; distract my thoughts, obstruct my most eager wishes and endeavours, and fix me down to earth and misery, when I would fly to thy embraces. I cannot in this vale of sorrow enjoy my Lord, my love; but wait with hope, and greatly long for that happy change, which shall translate me to the spirits of just men made perfect, and render me partner in their bliss. But let not, LORD, my sufferings and tears be lost; Remember and pity my present wretchedness, and grant my prayers and sighs an easy and effectual access into thy blessed presence.

Thou, LORD, art the brightness of thy Father's glory; dart thy chearing beams into my soul; enlighten its darkness, and scatter its discomforts.

To

To thee the very thoughts and most secret desires of every heart are known; by thee silent wishes and unutterable groans are perfectly understood. O hear me, when I speak in this language, and pour out my supplications in sighs and griefs, which words cannot explain. Even when my tongue lies still, my thoughts are in motion; and my heart within my breast is full of ejaculations not to be express'd. "How long, (say I to myself) how long will my Lord, my bridegroom delay his coming? O! that he would condescend to enter under the roof of his unworthy and afflicted servant! O that he would stretch forth his almighty hand, and deliver this wretch, just ready to perish, out of all the misery and trouble, which surround, oppress, and are ready to devour him! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. For without thee, no day, no hour, is joyous or comfortable, for thou art my hope, my joy, and all my worldly wealth; but thy absence is the very extremity of poverty and want.

Behold me, lying in this prison of the flesh, fettered and bound up with the chain of my sin, till the pitifulness of thy great mercy set me free, and the light of thy countenance, breaking into this darksome dungeon, assure me of thy love and favour. "Let others covet and set their affections upon such wretched objects, as the carnal mind may think valuable; but, as for me, I will love and long for nothing, but thee, my God, alone; for thou, my God, alone, art my hope and happiness; the only stay of my present frail condition, and the only bliss of my future and eternal state." Such is, and such shall ever be my address and fervent prayer. Nor will I let thee go until thou bless me; till thou

inspire new life with thy favour; and dwell in, and converse familiarly with my soul, by thy Holy Spirit and gracious presence.

(*Christ.*) Here, my son, behold me, always attentive to thy prayers, ever ready to extend the comfort and relief which thou do'st earnestly implore. Thy tears and fervent desires, the sorrows of thy perplexed heart, and the strong cries of a wounded conscience, have made way to the throne of Grace, and brought me down to thy speedy succour and comfort; for I am ever nigh to such as be of an humble and contrite spirit, and my ears are always open to the prayers of my suffering servants.

(*Disciple.*) I did indeed presume, LORD, in the anguish of my soul, to beg what I am sensible I cannot deserve, and flee to thee, my God, for help. And lo! I am sincerely disposed to renounce all for thy sake. Nor will I ascribe to myself the glory of so zealous, so resign'd a temper: For thou, Lord, didst work this good disposition in me, and, by thy own preventing grace, didst kindle and excite my very first desires. I prayed, but it was thou only that preparedst my heart. I sought thee indeed, but was first moved thereto by thy impulse and direction. And for this first willingness, to obey thy call, I return thee my most humble and unfeigned thanks; acknowledging it thy best, thy sole gift, that I have been able so much as to think or intend any good thing. Since then the whole of what I do or desire well is thine, my duty is to cherish every holy motion, to improve the early and happy assistances of thy grace, to submit myself without any reserve to thy holy direction, and, in the midst of the very best performances which thou qualifiest me for, constant-

stantly and humbly to remember my own vileness and inability. For, who, O Lord, is like unto thee? Or what is there in heaven or earth, which hath, or boasts of any excellence, comparable to my God and Saviour? Thy works are just and true, thy precepts right and equitable, thy providence great and glorious, by which all things are govern'd after a most wise, holy, good and wonderful manner. All honour and glory, and praise, be therefore ascribed to thee, who art the eternal wisdom of thy eternal Father: May heaven, and earth, and all the creatures, celebrate thy excellencies, and in this general consort I will join; my mouth shall declare thy astonishing works, thy great glories; and I will never cease to praise and adore my God, while I have a being.

R E F L E X I O N.

THE emptiness and vanity of all things here below is manifest from hence, that there is nothing which this world affords, can fill the desires, or give any real satisfaction or happiness to the immortal soul of man. It is in God alone that rest, peace and happiness are to be found. We way wander from object to object; we may torture invention to find out the most exquisite delights; yet, when we have enjoy'd every pleasure that human thought can frame, the soul is still unsatisfied, it is still longing after something which it cannot find in all the gratifications of sense; something to complete its happiness; which something is to be found in God alone; he is the *Summum Bonum*, the chief good, of a rational being.

What greater pleasure can the mind of man enjoy than in contemplating the incomprehensible

perfections of the divine Being! the marvellous effects of his creating power! the wonders of his redeeming love! What an ineffable delight fills the soul when it considers all the glorious attributes of the infinite Majesty of heaven, employ'd in its service, directing, managing, and over-ruling every thing for its proper good and welfare; and conducting it through a variety of vicissitudes in this life, to an eternal happiness in another world! The soul that can agreeably entertain such reflections, has no room for the gayeties and gratifications, the luxuries and amusements that are so apt to captivate the men of this world; it looks on them with contempt; and expresses a pious indignation, whenever they interrupt, tho' necessarily, the sweet intercourses of its communion with God. As God can bear no competitor in the worship and service which he requires of his creatures, so neither can the pious soul bear any competitor for its love and affections, no object on which to fix its desires, hopes, and expectations, rest and happiness, but the Author and Original of all goodness, the Fountain of happiness, and at whose Right Hand are rivers of pleasure for ever-more. Happy indeed is that man whose heart is prepared to receive such extatick bliss, whose conscience is purified from dead works, who has a true relish of these heavenly delights, who makes God his confidence, his comfort under all his trials and afflictions, his support under spiritual conflicts and troubles of the mind, his strength in all his weaknesses and infirmities, and the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the only mansion where he expects an entire freedom from evils of every kind, and an eternal rest for his soul.

CHAP. XXIV.

*The Mercies of GOD to be thankfully
remember'd.*

(Disciple.)

O P E N *thou the eyes of my understanding, O LORD, that I may see and obey the wondrous things of thy Law: Ps. cxix. Make me perfectly acquainted with thy will, and possess me with a reverent and grateful sense of all thy goodness and loving-kindness to me and to all men; that I may shew forth thy praise, and publish thy mercies; thy mercies, which are so numerous and great, that I can never magnify them worthily: The least of them exceeds my power to express; and when I consider them, I am so far from any vain pretence of merit, that all my thoughts are overwhelm'd in wonder and astonishment. For all our advantages of mind and body, of person and fortune, those which are endowments and ornaments of nature, and those accomplishments which are attain'd by art and industry, are all the effects of thy bounty and beneficence; from whom every good and perfect gift cometh. James i. 17.*

Thou art the common source, the universal repository, from whence are derived all our benefits. Not to all in equal proportions, 'tis true; but, be the measure little or much, 'tis still thy distribution. He who receives most is indebted for the whole to thy liberality; and he whose portion is small, could not have had that little
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but from thee. He, on whom thou hast bestow'd thy blessings most liberally, is not from the largeness of thy bounty to take an estimate of himself; his plenty is no ground for any confidence or boast of his own merit, nor any cause of insulting over his brethren, or behaving himself indecently, and disesteeming or despising those, from whom thy mercies have distinguished him. For the greatness of a man's worth is most eminently discovered by a modest and mean opinion of himself, gentleness and condescension to others, gratitude and devotion towards God. And the more sensible they are of their own wants and unworthiness, the better they qualify themselves for fresh and greater demonstrations of thy love and liberality. Again, the man to whom thou hast distributed more sparingly, ought not to repine or be discouraged, nor fret and grudge the larger portion of his wealthier neighbour; but keep his eyes and mind wholly fixed upon thee, and admire the freedom of thy grace, which, as it cannot be obliged to any, so gives to all largely, and without partiality or respect of persons.

For thou art to be praised for all thy gifts by every man, because all proceeds from thee; and thou art master of thy own favours; thou givest without upbraiding, and withholdest without injustice: Thy wisdom knows best what measures are most proper and expedient for each person; and the reasons why one man differs from another, 'tis impossible for us to know, but must be left entirely to thy judgment, to determine the fitness of them.

Of this, LORD, I am firmly persuaded, and therefore readily acknowledge and adore thy mercy, in suffering me to want many of those advantages,

vantages, which the generality of mankind value at a high rate. Nay, I am satisfied, that men ought to be afflicted, and humble their souls, with the consideration of their own wants and unworthiness; yet in such a manner, as not only ^{not} to give way to sad despondencies and distrust of thy mercy; but even from this very subject to draw matter of comfort and joy; because thou hast in so particular a manner declared thy affection to penitent and humble souls, and given them marks of thy peculiar favour.

Such were thy blessed Apostles, so mean in their own and the world's esteem, whom thou madest choice to be witnesses of thy truth, and attendants upon thy person: These very heroes, these christian worthies, whom thou hast appointed judges and rulers of the whole world in what concerns religion, were recommended to that high promotion, by being meek and poor in spirit, void of guile, and mortified to the world; patient in suffering, content under insults, and resigned under the most cruel treatment; proud of nothing, but being thought worthy to endure shame and pain for the Name of Jesus. So different were they from common men, so singular were their notions, that they were still ready joyfully and eagerly to embrace what others dread, detest, and avoid with all their power and industry. The never failing spring of joy and comfort, which they who sincerely love and fear thee, and are thankful for thy infinite goodness, find within, flows from the constant resignation of their minds to thy disposals, and make every dispensation of thy providence welcome to them. They are abased with as much satisfaction, as others are exalted; they regard not themselves as high or low, honourable or despised, according to common estimation;

mation ; but consider that their station and circumstances in the world are chosen and ordained by thee, and therefore must necessarily be good, nay, better than any other, because they are of thy own appointment, which always knows and chuses the best. Could we but once attain this considerate temper of mind ; the various accidents of life would no longer be either much uneasy, or excessively pleasant. The violent shocks upon our passions would be effectually prevented ; because thy honour would be preferr'd to the gratification of our own appetites and mistaken interests. Poverty and shame would be acceptable, as proceeding from the same hand with riches and honour ; and even those things which are most agreeable to the taste and inclinations of human nature, would delight and comfort us more, with the consideration of their being bestowed by thee, the Author of all our happiness, than for the sake of any advantages to be had from the things themselves. The zeal for thy honour, in the extremest distress, should support good men more, and find greater regard from them, than all the wealth, or glory, or other worldly blessings, which thou at any time dost or canst bestow, upon the most prosperous of the sons of men in this life. So small is the consideration of the greatest gift, in comparison of the wise, the good, the Almighty Giver and Disposer of our fortunes ; who orders every thing for the best, and is, in all, our kindest friend, and constant benefactor.

CHAP. XXV.

The Way to Peace and Liberty.

(Christ.)

Listen to me, my son, and I will instruct thee in the right way to true peace and perfect liberty.

(Disciple.) Be pleased, LORD, so to do; for such instruction will be both agreeable and profitable to me.

(Christ.) Let it be thy care, rather to comply with the desires and commands of others, than to indulge thy own inclinations. Chuse a moderate, nay, a mean fortune, rather than greatness and abundance. Be humble, obedient, and condescending in all thy behaviour. Let it be thy constant desire and prayer, That God would perform his pleasure, and dispose of thee and all thy affairs, as to him seems most convenient. The man who hath brought himself to this temper and spirit, be assured is in the ready way to peace of mind, and true content.

(Disc.) The words, LORD, which thou hast spoken are few in number, but full of sense, and of very comprehensive extent; and I can easily discover in this little space the grounds of great perfection in virtue. Could I but carefully observe these rules, how happily would all excessive concern and violent disorder at any accidents of human life be suppress'd, or wholly prevented? And if at any time hereafter I find myself oppress'd with immoderate cares or resentments,

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I am taught by thy wisdom how to discover the true cause of my trouble ; and, that I suffer for my negligence in complying with this doctrine. But such compliance, LORD thou knowest, is not in the power of nature and mere reason ; and therefore I entreat the mighty assistances of thy grace, which nothing can withstaad, for making those improvements, which, in the present state of corruption, are to flesh and blood impracticable. Nothing is more acceptable in thy sight than the conquest of our infirmities, and bold advances in goodness. Put forth then thy helping Hand, and what thou hast taught me to know, enable me to perform ; That I may have the satisfaction both of approving my own obedience, and (what without thee I cannot do) successfully, pursuing my own happiness and salvation.

R E F L E X I O N.

A Prince who would establish his throne in perfect peace, must first subdue all his adversaries, encounter every opposition, and perhaps submit to the fatigues of many a rough campaign : Thus a Christian who would enjoy perfect peace and liberty must be content to suffer innumerable hardships, the most mortifying trials, the lowest degrees of the most humbled state ; however reproached, culumniated, or abused, he must not return reproach for reproach, or abuse for abuse, but, with a composed and tranquil mind, leave the justice of his cause to be vindicated by him who is the protector of the innocent, and who will, in his own time and way, appear in the behalf of his injured and oppressed servants.

Let us then resign ourselves entirely to the dis-

disposal of this our gracious Father and heavenly Benefactor; if it is his pleasure that we should live in subjection to wicked men; if it is his will that we should have but a small share in the good things of this world; if he sees fit to place us in the lowest and most inferior state among mankind, whatever station and circumstance we are in, let us consider it as the good pleasure of our God to dispose of us in such a manner; let us cheerfully submit to all his dealings with us; so shall we put it out of the power of men and devils to disturb the peace and tranquillity of our minds; every affliction, every vexation and disappointment shall lose its sting; none of these things shall be able to break the peace of our consciences, and while this continues uninterrupted, while we make God our only hope and confidence, so long as we have a strict regard to our duty, we may set the world at defiance, and say with the Apostle, *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

CHAP. XXVI.

A Prayer against evil Thoughts.

(Disciple.)

GO not far from me, O Lord, my God make haste to help me: Psal. lxx. For evil imaginations are continually rising in my breast, and a multitude

of tears and horrors inclose my soul on every side. The sense of my dangerous condition overwhelms me with the deepest affliction and distress, while I see the greatness of my danger, and the number of my enemies, but know not how to escape the one, or to fight my way thro' the other.

(*Christ.*) Remember, son, my promise; *I will go before thee, and make the crooked places strait; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places.*

(*Disc.*) Since, LORD, thou hast applied those mystical words to my comfort, suffer me, I humbly beseech thee, experimentally to find the gracious accomplishment of them in my own person; and scatter all my dark and gloomy, my vain and sinful thoughts, by shedding the light of thy grace around into my heart. For in the extremity of grief and anguish, this is my hope, my comfort, and only support, to take sanctuary in thy goodness, to repose all my confidence, and cast the burden of my cares upon thee; to pour out my whole soul before thee, and wait with patience thy own good time, to succour and assist me in, and to give me a happy issue out of all my afflictions.

CHAP. XXVII.

A Prayer for spiritual illumination.

(*Disciple.*)

SEnd forth, O Blessed Jesus, the bright beams of thy heavenly and eternal light, that it may enlighten all the dark corners of my heart, and

and so totally dissipate every cloud of ignorance and error, with which I am now so miserably wrapt about. Call home my wandering thoughts, and repel the temptations which so violently assault me. Fight thou my battles, and subdue those fierce wild beasts, those brutish lusts, which ravage in this desert, and are ever endeavouring to devour me; that by thy power the wilderness may be turned into a palace, and instead of the outrageous cries and howlings of raging passions, no sounds may be heard there, but songs of praise. Thou LORD, *who commandest the winds and the waves, and they obey thee*, Mark i. silence the storms within my breast; say to that troubled sea, *Be still*, and immediately there shall be *peace* and a profound calm. *Send out thy light and thy truth*, and warm this barren soil; for such am I, till mellowed and impregnated by the Sun of Righteousness. Plentifully pour down thy grace upon me, and water me with thy refreshing moisture, which like seasonable showers and gentle dew, may enrich my soul, and enable it to bring forth generous fruit in great abundance. Raise and spiritualize my mind, which is depress'd with the dross of earthly desires, and draw my affections up to heaven and heavenly objects; that the agreeable relish of that bliss above may give me a disgust and loathing to all the nauseous pleasures here below. Deliver, or rather snatch me away with a holy violence, from all the perishing comforts of this mortal state; for a desire of happiness I find is greater than any creature can either stifle, or in a good degree assuage. Unite me to thyself with inviolable bands of holy love; thus only shall my soul be satisfied; for thou alone canst answer all my longings, and the whole world without thee is an empty bubble, vanity and nothing.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Be not busily inquisitive after other

Peoples affairs.

(Christ.)

MY son, be careful to avoid a curious humour, and do not create to thy self unnecessary troubles, by interfering with matters or persons, which do not concern thee. For, what is this or that to thee? *Follow thou me.* What have you to do with the virtues or vices, the conduct or the indiscretions, in what manner they behave themselves, who are their companions, or with what discourse they entertain one another? Why all this eager and inordinate zeal to vindicate or accuse them? You shall not answer for their miscarriages, nor be at all the better for their excellencies. Your own words and actions are the only things you will be answerable for; therefore take particular care of them, and beware, lest this busy and malicious impertinence do not increase thy own reckonings. Trouble not your self to turn informer, nor take upon you the office of a judge. Leave that to me. I know every man perfectly, and nothing which is done under the sun can escape my observation. I am truly apprised of each persons condition, see every action, nay, every intention, every sign; not only what they do, but what they intend to do. These things are far removed out of your sight; and therefore you cannot judge truly, if you could attempt it innocently. But know, my son, that judgment is my prerogative; and therefore it were

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arrogance and usurpation in you to attempt it, even supposing you were qualified to judge others. Study rather to be quiet; confine your self to your own business, and let the prying, censorious, the vain and intriguing world pursue their own devices. For all which they shall assuredly be one day summoned to a severe account; for they cannot by all their arts and specious colours impose upon me. Engage not with them in the same designs, nor let the empty phantom of a great reputation, the pride of numerous and honourable relations or acquaintance, or the particular intimacies and friendships of celebrated persons, take up your time and thoughts. These only serve to distract and perplex the mind, and deceive you at last with fond expectations; they lead you into a mist, and there they leave you lost and bewildred. But I would point out to thee the true way, and communicate my instructions, freely, if you were but at leisure to receive my secrets, and careful to observe my motions; by opening the door when I knock, and watching all opportunities of entertaining me in thy heart.

REFLEXION.

WHOEVER rightly considers his station in life, will find business enough of his own to employ him, without intermeddling with the affairs of other people. What man is he that can say he is absolutely free from all manner of cares and concerns, and has nothing to do with this world? If his riches and prosperous circumstances render him independant on men, he is still dependant on God, and is answerable for those gifts of fortune, and endowments of the mind, for all those talents with which God has entrusted him; and which, if he employs
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and improves as he ought to do, will afford him but little leifure to enquire into the conduct or circumstances of others.

Whoever duly examines the irregular dispositions of his own mind, his natural propensity to sin and folly, the violence of his passions, the vicious bent of his inclinations, his habitual aptness to sin, the innumerable transgressions of his life, will find business enough to employ every moment of his time, and will even think he has scarce enough to discharge every part of his duty both to God and man. He considers, that the day is coming when he must give a strict and severe account, in what manner, and to what purposes, he has spent his days; that he shall not then be ask'd how others have behav'd themselves, but whether his own conduct is clear of offence; not whether others have acted conscientiously in their traffick and concerns with one another, but whether his own actions have been free from fraud and guile; not in what manner his neighbour serves God, if his sincerity in the performance of religious duties be real or counterfeit, or his zeal for the honour of his Maker be false or true; but it infinitely concerns himself that no hypocrisy lodges in his own heart, that no private views, no worldly ends have any bias upon his mind in any of his religious concerns.

Could we dislodge the world, and all its trifling vanities from our hearts, how joyfully would Christ take possession of them? He delights to dwell with that soul who prefers his company to that which is deem'd the most agreeable among men, the witty, the facetious, the learned; he is better satisfied with the ravishing pleasure of one hour's communion with his blessed Redeemer, than with the luxurious gratifications of a sensual appe-

appetite, tho' it were possible to lengthen out the feast to the extent of an age.

CHAP. XXIX.

Of true Peace, and the Way to obtain it.

(*Christ.*)

THIS was my promise which I once made to my Disciples, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you*, John xiv. But tho' peace is what every man desires, yet the qualification and dispositions, necessary for procuring and preserving it, are the care of very few. My peace takes up its dwelling with the meek and humble. And the peace of my servants consists in steady patience; in attending carefully to my words, and pursuing my directions. Therefore, upon all occasions, be sure to make a conscience of what you do or say: Let your duty of pleasing me be your chief, your only concern; and the enjoyment of me your ultimate, your only end and desire. Do not rashly censure other people's words or actions, nor affect to be a man of business or secrets; for this will be the best method to make your troubles few and light. I say, *few and light*; for wholly to escape trouble, and to be entirely without any affliction at all in mind, body, or estate, is not consistent with the nature of your present condition, but one of the privileges reserved for heaven and immortality.

Do not therefore fancy, that you are then in

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perfect peace, when you are not sensible of any calamity or disturbance; or, that a present freedom from assaults is an argument that you have no enemy, and that all is safe and well with you; nor, when things succeed according to your own wish, that this is a proof of your extraordinary virtue and perfection; nor, if your zeal and piety be fervent, and your contemplations full of delight, conclude yourself a particular favourite of God: For these are foreign and deceitful inferences; such as neither prove the sincerity, nor the degree and perfection of virtue in any man. This is manifested by quite different marks. The devoting and resigning yourself entirely to the will of God; not seeking your own, but his glory in every thing you do; considering all events wisely, and receiving prosperity and adversity with composure and equanimity; and such a brave and constant perseverance in goodness, as, even when the assistances and encouragements of grace are withdrawn for a season, can resolutely go on, and harden itself to undergo yet sharper trials with constancy; such lowliness of mind, as never puffs a man up with an opinion of his own merit, but in the worst extremities can find matter of praise and thanks for that mercy, which even then inflicts much less than his sins have deserved; and a firm hope, that God will not cast off his servants; this is the way of peace, the way that leads to sure consolation and favour with God. And if, to your not setting any value upon your own villainess, then be assured your peace is built upon so solid, so immoveable a foundation, that no mortal man, while here on earth, is capable of attaining to it in greater perfection.

REFLEXION.

WHATEVER troubles, vexations and disappointments we meet with from the world, they should not give us any disquiet or discomposure, if we are satisfied or assured, that God, through Christ, is at peace with us. The peace that Christ gives, is real and substantial, a freedom from the guilt of sin and all the turbulent and disturbing effects thereof; we have no longer any gloomy apprehensions of the wrath of God, because we know his wrath is appeased; we fear not all the wiles, the snares, and stratagems of the devil, because we are assured they shall not prevail against us; death, and the dark appartments of the grave have lost their terrors, because Christ has promised to give victory over both.

If thou art minded to enjoy peace with the world, as well as peace in thy own mind, study to be quiet among thy neighbours; interfere with the concerns of no man, unless thereto requested, and then let it be thy endeavour to make up and adjust differences between parties at variance; put an end, if possible, to all litigious disputes and contentions, heal the breaches of friendship, and do all in thy power to bring in peace where it is wanted, and to settle and confirm it where it seems to be wavering. And as thy neighbours, through thy means, enjoy peace and tranquillity among themselves, be assured that thou wilt be the last they will give any cause of disquiet or disturbance to.

Yet a Christian is not to expect a perfect freedom from cares and troubles; far from it; there is no ground in Scripture or reason to hope for any such a blessing on this side heaven: The peace therefore

which he is to seek after, is the peace of conscience, and a firm perswasion that God is reconciled to him through the merits and satisfaction of our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ; this will counterballance all the vexations and troubles which in this state of mortality we are liable to, and enable us to suffer pains and reproaches with a calmness and serenity of mind, which is a foretaste of that peace and rest which the saints and children of God shall eternally enjoy in heaven.

CHAP. XXX.

True LIBERTY.

(Disciple.)

THE utmost perfection mortality can aspire after, is this, namely, to abandon all worldly thoughts, and to keep the mind constantly upon the business of the soul, and exercised in heavenly contemplations: To pass thro' a life abounding with cares and troubles, yet free and unconcerned. Provided however that this unconcernedness proceed not from stupidity, heaviness of apprehension, or slothful neglect; but from a generous liberty of soul, by which the man gets free from all immoderate desires, and too tender affection for earthly enjoyments. This faculty I earnestly covet, and beg thee, O my God, to protect me against the cares of the world, lest the necessities of my body should employ me too anxiously; and, under that pretence, my affections be enlared, and so I entangled

tangled in multiplicity of businets, to the prejudice and neglect of better and weightier concerns; or, lest the pleasures of sense should entice me to sin, or discourage me from the steady pursuit of virtue and heaven, by too tender and afflicting resentments of any calamities which may befall me.

I speak not now of those vain superfluities, which the deluded world so eagerly contend for; but beg to be preserved in these miseries and dangers. For miseries and dangers I cannot but account the common and unavoidable incumbrances of life; since these are heavy and cling close about the soul, and put it under such a strait confinement, that it cannot with freedom obey the dispositions it feels within, it cannot get above concern for the world, nor fix its desires and endeavours upon spiritual objects. Thou, O my God, art sweetness inexpressible; but that my soul may have a true taste of thy divine consolations, turn, I beseech thee, all my worldly comforts into bitterness; lest they vitiate my palate, and give me a disgust to heavenly things, by some deluding charm of present pretended good. O! let not flesh and blood prevail in their conflicts with the spirit; let not the world and its fading glories cheat me into ruin; let not the subtle enemy of mankind seduce me with his tempting wiles. Give me courage to resist, when called to an encounter; patience to endure, when called to suffering; firmness of mind to persevere immoveably in my duty, when temptations and evil suggestions labour to draw me aside. Exchange, if it be thy will, the transitory and false comforts of this world, for the oyl of true gladness, the assistances and sweet satisfactions of thy blessed Spirit; and instead of carnal love, and sensual inclination, let the love

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and desire of thee be diffused thro' my whole heart, and reign there without a rival.

The necessary care for food and raiment, and the conveniencies by which life is sustained, is a grievance and obstruction to zealous and refined souls; what then must be a burthen, let me not make an occasion of sin; by using the creatures intemperately, by a luxurious indulgence, or inordinate appetite. Nature, I am sensible, it is my duty to support; and therefore, entirely to refuse and neglect these provisions were sin and foul ingratitude: But to enlarge our desires beyond the proper uses of these things, and let them rove after superfluity and vanity, delicacy and delight; this the law of God hath most wisely forbidden; because it were in effect to connive at, and countenance all licentiousness, by cherishing the flesh, and animating and supporting it in insolence and rebellion against the spirit. Between these two extremes there lies a safe middle way, in which I humbly implore the guidance of thy hand; lest I mistake the path of virtue, and going astray after my own inclination or unadvised zeal, should be lost and bewilder'd in measures which thou hast prescribed for me.

CHAP. XXXI.

Self-love an Enemy to Virtue and Happiness.

(*Christ.*)

MY son, if thou desirest to secure all, know that it is not to be obtained at any price, less than thy all. Earth must be bartered for heaven;

ven; and where I give myself, I expect the whole man in exchange. Think not therefore of any private reserves of interest or pleasure, in bar to my entire possession; for the whole world cannot do thee greater injury, than such self-love. This sticks more close, while other things are loose and at a distance. And all things fasten upon thee, only according as the degree of thy own love and inclination for them gives occasion and advantage. If your mind and its affections be pure, sincere, and moderate, nothing shall have the power to enslave you.

But, what pretence can you have for suffering them to be otherwise? For who would set his love upon things, which are not to be obtained without difficulty, and very often not with it; or, if they be, cannot be enjoy'd without danger? Who is so mad as to court bonds and captivity, and be fond of possessing that, which will obstruct his weightiest concern, and rob him of his liberty? Were these considerations duly attended to, it must appear the height of folly, for any man not to resign himself up entirely to me; to waste his strength with unprofitable vexations, and labour in the fire for vanity, and create troubles, which it is in his power to avoid. Obey my will then, and submit every thing to my disposal, and then thou art out of the reach of the world and its temptations. But, if interest and private respect still govern thy affections, all thy application will be to no purpose. Thou runnest away from troubles in one place, to meet them in another; seeking rest but finding none, because thou always carriest thy torment about thee. For, even in thy most successful attempts, there will be some thing deficient to give thee
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sufficient satisfaction; and, in thy most private retirements thou wilt be dogged and haunted by some crosses. The world and all its advantages can do thee no service by being enjoyed; but, thou wilt find thy account in slighting and despising them. This is the case, not of riches only, but of honour and reputation too. For they also make themselves wings, and fly away; and thou canst never be safe or happy, but by mortifying thy ambition and vain-glory.

How many people indulge themselves with fond imaginations of ease and leisure to be good, in a country, or a college-life? But cloisters and desarts signify nothing, without the piety and disposition of a hermit. The convenience of place is very little; and all its boasted expectations vanish, except the man be changed, as well as his residence, and manner of living. And this change neither is, nor can be effected, unless his mind be fixed in me alone, as the proper, the only center of all its affections and desires. The liberty men enjoy otherwise, is very short and deceitful; for fresh occasions of sin and trouble will quickly offer themselves; and then not only the old inconveniences will return again, but new and greater, and such as are peculiar to that new state of life upon which they have entred: And thus their very refuge becomes a fresh temptation,

CHAP. XXXII.

A Prayer for Purity of Heart, and heavenly Wisdom.

(Disciple.)

EStablish me, Lord, with thy free Spirit, Psal. li. 11. that, being strengthened in the inner man, I may clear my soul from all vain anxiety, and banish idle fears, and surmount the discouragements and distracting troubles of the world. Let not the wild and impatient desires of any thing here, though never so alluring and seemingly valuable, perplex my thoughts, and draw me off from thee. Give me grace to consider my self, and all below, as things full of vanity, and of very short continuance. For such indeed, are all things under the sun, *vexation of spirit, and altogether lighter than vanity*; and he is truly wise, who considers them in this light. Grant me, O Lord, above all things, that heavenly wisdom, which may teach and instruct me in what manner I may seek thee so as to find thee; so to love and delight in thee, that I may have no relish for any thing besides thee; to consider all things as disposed by thy wisdom. Grant me, I beseech thee, timely to discover, and carefully avoid the flatterer, and with patience and meekness to suffer contradiction from whatever hand it comes. For that man has undoubtedly no small share of wisdom, who, on the one hand, can stand unmov'd in the fiercest storm of words; and on the other, can turn a deaf ear to the musical charms of a flattering Syren; thus will he steadily pursue the

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course he has begun, be secure in every kind of danger, and sufficiently guarded against every adversary.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Be not too much concern'd at being slander'd.

(Christ.)

MY Son, vex not thyself, when the tongues of evil men are let loose against thee, or when they entertain disadvantageous thoughts concerning thee. Reflect on thy own actions and conduct, and by that judge thyself; and thou wilt soon perceive thou hast but little reason to judge ill of another. If thy heart is sincere, and thy conduct upright, thou wilt have no regard to flying words.

It is a great point of wisdom to keep silence when evil reports are abroad, and at such time to retire to me, and not to be too much concern'd at the wrong judgment which men may pass upon thee.

Thy peace of mind will be very unsettled, if thou let it depend on the tongues of men; for their good or evil thoughts of thee, cannot make thee better or worse, or in the least change thee from what thou really art.

But, after all, where do'st thou expect to find solid peace and true glory? Where, but in me only? Whoever would enjoy peace within himself, must neither be very solicitous of pleasing men, or too fearful of displeasing them. From an inordi-

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CHAP. XXXIV.

How to address GOD in Time of Adversity.

(Disciple.)

THE Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord. Job. i. 21. Yea, blessed and praised be thy Name, for this very calamity, with which thy fatherly wisdom and affection is now pleased to chastise and try me. I cannot flee from the scourge of thy rod; but I will run to thee for succour; and pray, that thou would'st assist me with thy patience, and turn all my sufferings to my soul's advantage. I am indeed in trouble, and cannot but own that I am in disorder, on account of this present affliction. But this is my own infirmity; and *I know not what to pray for as I ought.* Rom. viii. 16. For what shall I say? *Lord, save me from this hour.* John xii. No, gracious Father, thou hadst not brought me to this hour, had it not been for thy glory, and my own good. And therefore I will rather pray that my affliction may continue till thy gracious purposes are accomplished in me; and, when thou seest that I am sufficiently humbled, then, and not before, do thou refresh, and raise, and deliver me out of it.

For, I am duly sensible, that my deliverance can come from no other hand; for, as to myself, I am weak, and poor, and blind, and ignorant of what is best, or what to do. Grant me then, blessed Lord, a rescue in thy own due time; and in the mean while strengthen me with patience, that by thy powerful aid I may bear up against the severest tribulations, without despondency or distraction.

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Not my will, Lord, but thine be done, shall be the constant language of my heart: My sinful heart, which acknowledges thy mercy in the midst of wrath, and sadly reflects, that thou hast punished me much less than my offences have deserved. O that this humble sense of my own guilt may work in me such a quiet and contented submission to thy will, that I may neither unduly withdraw from, nor unthankfully murmur at the weight or the extent of my sufferings, till thou shalt see fit to compose this storm, and restore to me the comforts of thy favour and indulgent providence.

But, if the storm should still rage, this is not the effect of want of power in thee to calm it; but because a perfect calm is not yet proper for me. Thy mighty Hand can lay it in a moment: Thou canst abate its fury, or thou canst protect and support me under its violence and extremity. I am persuaded thou canst; for thou hast taught me by my own experience, and the remembrance of thy former mercies will not suffer me to question the efficacy of thy power. But, in proportion as my grief and burthen is greater, so much the sweeter and refreshing let thy healing virtue, and spiritual consolations be; and let me have a sensible experience of the performance of thy gracious promise, *That thou wilt not suffer thy servants to be tempted above that they are able, but wilt with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it.* 1 Cor. x. 12.

CHAP. XXXV.

*How we are to seek and depend upon the
Divine Assistances.*

(Christ.)

I Am, my Son, that Lord, who is the strength and refuge of afflicted men in the time of trouble, and in whom thou dost well to take sanctuary in all thy distresses. But, if thy comforts come not speedily, thou dost thyself frequently obstruct, and disappoint thy own expectations, by deferring thy prayers, and by thy backwardness to ask relief. For, men generally try all other comforts and remedies first, and reserve me for their last refuge, in times of such extremity, when they find nothing will do them service; and then my honour obliges me, not only to defeat those human contrivances, in which they vainly trusted, but to delay my own succours; and, by making them suffer for their impious neglect, force them to acknowledge, that I am the Deliverer of them that trust in me; and that without me no succours are strong, no counsels wise, no remedies successful. And, if their sufferings find some present mitigation, this only skins the wound, but is no perfect cure; and the pain it asswages will return again with redoubled rage and anguish. For, I alone, who gave the stroke, can heal it; and, as there is no evil which the LORD hath not done, so neither is there any deliverance which the LORD hath not wrought.

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But, now that thy supplications are come up into my ears, and thou hast cast thyself upon my mercy, I will revive thy drooping spirits, and thou shalt, after this dark and dreadful storm, rejoice again in the light of my countenance. For I am ready, not only to restore thee to thy former happiness, but also to recompence thy past pains and patience, by plentiful additions of more and richer blessings. And let not any adversity, tho' never so grievous, prevail upon thy frailty to distrust my mercy. For, can there any thing be too difficult for me? Or am I like deceitful men, who sooth their dependants up with promises, which they never intend to perform? Have I at any time broken my word? Where then is thy faith, where then is thy courage? Bear up bravely, and discharge thy duty. For, grace and consolation, if thou fail not to qualify thyself for receiving them, shall certainly approach in due time. *If the Lord tarry, yet wait for him, for he will surely come and heal thee. Heb. ii.* The load, which now oppresses thee, is laid there only, to try thy strength and virtue; nor would it weigh thee down so low, if it was not made heavier by thy own folly, by heaping on anxious cares for the future, upon thy present sufferings. But this is to conspire against thyself, and turn thy own tormentor. *Sufficient to each day is the evil thereof; Matt. vi. 34.* without charging it with additional troubles, which by no means belong to it. These are indeed impertinent and senseless at all times; for, how absurd is it to exalt or cast one's self down by hopes and fears, and fond representations of distant good and evil, which have not any being in nature, and in all probability may never happen at all? Dismiss these empty but painful follies, which
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are nothing but the creatures of thy own sick fancy. For such delusions are a great reproach upon reason, and a greater yet upon Christianity; when thy mean timorous soul is frightened by such airy phantoms, and so very easily led captive by the enemy's suggestions. And such are these desponding or terrible apprehensions of what will be hereafter. Whether it be or not, it is alike to him; for his business is to deceive and undo men. And true or false hopes and terrors contribute equally to this design. The love of present good, and dread of approaching evils, are instruments of ruin, employed by him, with wonderful address; and, so ruin be but the consequence, the methods and management of it are perfectly indifferent to him.

Do not therefore suffer fear to deject thee, but still maintain thy christian courage, and place thy confidence in my mercy. I am often ready at hand, when thou thinkest me at a distance; and, at those times, when all is given for gone, things are so far from desperate, that prosperous events and most surprising comforts are breaking in upon thee, like a glorious sun from an astonishing eclipse. 'Tis rashness therefore to conclude affairs are in a lost condition, because some disappointments have baulked your expectations: Nor can either thy own resentment of misfortunes within, or the violence of any calamity without, give thee sufficient grounds, from the deplorable state thy circumstances are in, to pronounce, That all hope of escape and better days are past. Nay, which is the most sensible and most lamentable case of any, if at the same time that I scourge thee with outward calamities, thou feel the inward supports of my grace withdrawn, which should enable thee to bear the rod; yet even so, do
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not imagine thyself forsaken, or that I have utterly cast thee from my presence. The way to heaven is set with briars and thorns; and they, who arrive at the kingdom, travel over craggy rocks and thro' howling deserts: And it is much more to their advantage to have their virtue awakened, and brightened, and brought to the test, by the smart of adversity, than that all things should go smoothly on, without any manner of molestation or interruption.

The heart of man is deceitful, who can know it? Thou thyself art often under very dangerous mistakes about thy own condition. Thou art ignorant what thou art, and much more ignorant what is fit for thee. But I, who am perfectly acquainted with both, see plainly, that it is proper and beneficial sometimes to be left to thyself; that thus struggling to so little purpose with the calamities that bear thee down, thou may'st be brought to a just and humble sense of thy infirmities; that this sense may check thy vanity, and shew, that thy most successful attempts, are owing entirely to another hand; and thou art in truth nothing less than that mighty man thou art apt to fancy thyself. This makes my depriving thee of thy usual comforts convenient, but still 'tis in my power to restore and increase them to thee, when I see that convenient too.

Nor think me cruel and unjust in these dispensations; for who shall hinder me from doing what I will with my own? I gave thee what of right thou couldst not claim; and I take away what thou hast no right to keep. For *every good and perfect gift is mine*, James i. 17. and not a debt, but a favour. If then affliction comes, remember 'tis of my sending; and I, who laid the cross, can both remove and recompense it: *I kill and make alive, I bring*

down to the grave, and raise up from it: 1 Sam. ii. And, in the moment that I lay aside my anger, and smile again, thy heaviness shall be changed into joy unspeakable.

In all my dealings with thee I am just, in all am wise, and good; and deserve not only thy admiration, but even thy thanks and praise. Could'st thou but rightly understand my methods, and the secret reasons of them, thou would'st drink up the bitter potion with joy; with joy, upon this very consideration, that I do not spare thee to thy hurt, but send thee afflictions in pure kindness, when I foresee they will be for thy advantage. Observe the tenure of my gracious promise, to my best beloved disciples: *As my Father loved me, even so have I loved you.* John xvi. But both my Father's love to me, and mine to them, was express'd, not by false and transitory joys, but by severe and tedious conflicts; by being called, not to honours, but to contumelies and disgrace; not by indulging them in sloth and ease, but by inuring them to trials and difficulties; by calling them, not to rest and peace, but to bring forth the noble and generous fruit of good works with patience. Remember well these words, my son, and then thou canst not think much to *drink of the cup that I drank of* so deeply, and to *be baptized with the baptism that I was baptized with.* Thou canst not then despair, or think, that God, in afflicting thee, hath no longer any care and concern for thy benefit; since even that tender, that unparallel'd, that unconceivable affection, with which he loved his own dear Son, hindred not his making that very *Captain of thy salvation perfect thro' sufferings.* Heb. ii. And what art thou? What is the best of men in comparison of him? What are the very

worst

worst of thy agonies and trials, in comparison of his!

REFLEXION.

WHEN a man is once assured of his interest in Christ, that his pardon is sealed by his supreme Judge in the high Court of Heaven, and that his name is written in the Book of Life, what need he vex and fatigue himself with the troubles, calumnies, and afflictions with which he may be loaded by the impotent malice of his most inveterate enemies? If God is his friend, what need he care for the combined rage of men and devils? If Christ is his Redeemer, what has he to fear from the wrath of God, due to impenitent sinners? If the crucified JESUS has made sufficient satisfaction to divine Justice for the breaches of the law, what can he apprehend from the curses pronounced against the transgressors of that law? If he has the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit to comfort and refresh his soul, what is there in the calamities and disappointments of the world, that can reasonably give him any uneasiness or disquiet?

Why then art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Trust in God; for he alone can and will, in due time, deliver thee out of all thy troubles. Believe in Christ; for he alone can save thee from the just demerits of thy sins. Pray earnestly for the comforts, helps, and consolations of the Holy Spirit; for these alone will be sufficient to counter-balance all the evils and vexations thou mayest meet with in this vale of tears; a strong support under all thy afflictions; an impregnable defence against

all the darts of the grand enemy of thy soul; an effectual antidote against the gilded poison of a tempting, flattering, deceitful world; a noble cordial against the bitter draught of an afflicted life; and a lamp of celestial brightness, to lighten thee in the dark and gloomy hour of death, and direct thy way to the mansions of eternal bliss and glory.

But if it should please God, for wise ends, to hide his face from thee, and seem to frown upon thee, think not therefore, that he is become thine enemy; but rather believe, that the trials and afflictions with which thou art exercised, is to render thy graces and virtues more illustrious; for gold, the more it is purged in the fire, the purer it is, and the brighter it shines; and that God, when he has accomplished his wise purposes in and by thee, he will again lift up the light of his countenance upon thee.

CHAP. XXXVI.

GOD alone worthy of Enquiry.

(*Disciple.*)

THY Mercy, LORD, is great, which hath assisted me thus far; but still, I perceive I want a larger portion of thy grace, which may lead me to such a state of perfection, as may secure and set me at liberty, from all the obstructions which the creatures lay in my way. For, so long as I retain an affection or concern for any thing in this world, I find my soul check'd and restrained in
her

her longings after thee and heaven. How often do I make the Prophet's with my own, *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest! Lo then would I get me away far off, and remain at a distance from the world.* Now what is more at ease, more abstracted from the world, than a true single-hearted honesty? What freedom is equal to his, who covets nothing upon earth? All created beings should indeed be neglected, and left behind in this flight; and a man must make a stretch even beyond himself, and lay aside his own natural inclinations and defects, in order to get a distinct view of the Creator, and those perfections in him, to which no creature bears any resemblance. Now this is the very reason, why so few employ their thoughts in heavenly contemplations with any sensible delight; because when they go about it, they do it unskilfully; for they bring with them those worldly affections that damp and disgust them in the undertaking.

It is not, I acknowledge, an easy matter, nay, 'tis impossible to flesh and blood, by its own strength, thus to purge the affections. Nothing less than a liberal and very powerful inspiration of divine grace can thus exalt the mind, and, as it were, carry the man out of himself. But, till such exaltation of the soul hath disengaged one from all temporal interests, and settled his affections on that one object which is alone worthy of them, God himself; all his knowledge and imagined excellencies are but of small account. For, whatever false notions of honour and greatness men may delude themselves with, yet still they have all poor and little souls, and dote upon that which ought to be contemned, who allow any thing, besides the infinite and eternal God, a very honourable place in their

their affections and esteem. For all, which is not God, is vanity and nothing, and ought to be nothing regarded. How vast a difference is there between the wisdom of a mortified pious man, enlightened from above, and the pompous learning of a profound and studious Divine? That knowledge, which comes from above, speaks its heavenly original, by its glorious and noble effects; and works a greater change in the man, a greater improvement in profitable knowledge, than all that comprehension, which the greatest abilities, and the most assiduous industry, can never attain to.

We often hear very glorious characters of Divine contemplation, and the wonderful delights and transports attending it; and these a great many appear very fond of. But when they regard not the necessary preparations for it, their minds are full of sensible ideas, and are wholly taken up with the things of this present world; and the subduing and mortifying their desires and passions is a matter they take but little care about. And, while their affairs continue in this posture, they are by no means qualified for those exercises of the mind. Methinks it is a most unaccountable folly, and argues, that men forget what spirit they are, or should be of, when they call themselves Christians, *i. e.* Spiritual Persons; who have solemnly renounced the world with its vanities, and the flesh with its sinful lusts; who profess to believe and to seek happiness in a future state, and to place that happiness in the perfection of their souls; and yet, in reproach and contradiction to those professions, suffer both body and sense to be carried away by them; lay out themselves entirely upon perishing and trifling advantages, while the substantial and everlasting are sadly neglected, and the affairs of their souls so

perfectly forgotten, that they scarce afford one serious thought to their most important concerns. Or, if at any time they set themselves to think, some trifle immediately interrupts and draws them off from any profitable recollections. Nay, they themselves fly out, and are glad to be diverted from a severe examination in their own state; which is sure, if diligently pursued, to present them with objects of shame and sorrow, such as will wound their sight, and soon make them weary of this necessary work. Thus we never give ourselves any trouble to observe which way our inclinations are disposed, or whither they tend; nor do we seriously bewail the abominable impurity of our hearts, though there be nothing but impurity there. *The way of all flesh is corrupt upon the earth*; Genes. vi. and that universal corruption, says the Scripture, brought a flood to destroy mankind and every creature. But whence, do we think, proceeds such corruption of manners? No doubt, from the corrupt affections of men. For, if this fountain be not sweet, the action, which is but a stream and emanation from it, must necessarily be flat and bitter. For a pure heart is the ground-work of a holy life; and as naturally proceeds from it, as the fruit from the tree.

And herein we are highly blameable, that so little regard is had to the dispositions of the heart; without which we can form no true judgment, either of ourselves or others. But this, which is in truth of the greatest moment, the very point upon which a man's whole character turns, seems to be forgotten, as a thing too nice and speculative to be very curious in. We fix our eyes upon the outward action, consider what, or how much a man hath done; but give ourselves no trouble to enquire with

with what sincerity, with what zeal, with what honest intention he did it, or whether with none of all these qualifications. So again, for the estimate we make of persons, they are all foreign from the true and proper foundation of merit and respect. The riches, valour, beauty, judgment, wit, eloquence, a good style, or a sweet voice, or a knack of management in town or country-business, his preferments, or his profession, these are the immediate subjects of our enquiry; and we proportion our value and respects accordingly. But a man's humility and poverty of spirit, his meekness and patience, his devotion and piety, these are rarely mentioned in the character, or recommended as motives to procure esteem. Thus nature and grace have their different prospects and affections. The *former* looks at the outside of a man, and values him according to things that are not his; the *latter* places all within, and makes no account at all of external ornaments and advantages. The former builds upon a false bottom, seeks herself what she values in others, and is frequently deceived and disappointed: The latter places her whole hope and love in God, and is never mistaken, never deluded by false expectations.

REFLEXION.

So great is the difference between things earthly and heavenly, spiritual and carnal, that the one can never consist with the other, but will be at perpetual variance while soul and body cohabit together; nor will the conflict end, till this mortal shall put on immortality, till faith shall be turned into vision, hope into fruition, and grace be swallowed up in glory.

Fain

Fain, indeed, would the pious soul be at rest, fain would she get free from this state of sin and mortality; she is tired with the continual sollicitations of sense; she is almost afraid she shall one day perish by the hand of her powerful enemies; she longs to be clasp'd in the embraces of her dear Redeemer, to converse with spiritual beings, to enjoy the company of Saints and Angels in a state of bliss and glory, as free from sin and all impurity, as it is from pain or the least mitigation and interruption of the most refined pleasures, the most exalted joys.

But so long as it is the good pleasure of her gracious God, that she should remain imprison'd in the body, she will make the best use she can of her bad condition; she will now and then give a look thro' the grates of her prison towards that heavenly country, of which she hopes in a short time to be possess'd; she agreeably entertains herself in a delightful foretaste of those immortal pleasures which are at God's Right Hand for ever more; and when she is thus lost, as it were, in the contemplation of immortal things, how trifling and contemptible do all the pomp, the splendour magnificence and grandeur of the world appear?

But, alas! how few are prepared for such a glorious work as this? How few are there whose hearts are so emptied of all worldly objects, so purified and refined from the dross and corruptions of sense, so mortified and dead to the world and all its vanities and incitements, as to be capable of entertaining without reserve, reluctance, or restraint, the Blessed Jesus in all his adorable graces and perfections? O most gracious God, come in upon our souls by thy almighty power, subdue sin in us, shed abroad thy love in our hearts, and fit and pre-

pare us for the enjoyment of thyself in eternal glory.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Of Self-denial.

(*Christ.*)

THOU canst not, Son, be perfectly free, till thou hast first attained to such a mastery, as entirely to subdue and deny thyself. For covetous persons, and lovers of themselves, the lustful, the busy, and unsettled men, the lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, are all slaves; vile and unprofitable slaves; condemned to fruitless, endless toil; seeking what they cannot find, and contriving what they will never be able to compass; or if they could, will never long enjoy it. For every thing that is not of God, is soon brought to nought. Observe this short, but certain maxim: *For sake all, and thou shalt find all.* Let go desire, and thou shalt lay hold on peace. Diligently consider this rule, and transcribe it into thy practice; for practice will explain and prove it to thee.

(*Disciple.*) This, Lord, is not the work of a single day, a maxim not fitted for weak capacities, but such, as in one short sentence contains the utmost perfection of a pious and resigned Christian.

(*Christ.*) And why, my Son, should that perfection affright or discourage thee? Summon up thy zeal, aspire to the true greatness of soul, and the nobler the virtue is, the more eager and generous resolution do thou express of attaining to it.

Oh!

Oh! that thou wert of that happy disposition, which utterly discards all narrow and self-interested considerations, and submits itself entirely to the obedience of my commands, and the disposals of my providence! Thus would thy person and thy behaviour be acceptable to thy God; thus wouldest thou enjoy great satisfaction, and peace in thy own breast. Alas! there are still many things, which must be forsaken; many, which till thou hast sacrificed to me, thou canst never obtain the happiness thou aimest at. Buy therefore of me the pure refined gold of a heavenly and refined disposition; for that shall make thee rich, above all the treasures of this world. Cast off the wisdom of this generation, and do not indulge thyself in such foolish imaginations: For carnal minds pursue shadows, and take delight in vanity and nothing. Remember I have told thee, that the things which are lightly esteemed, must be purchased at the expence of those, which this world esteems most precious. For what is more despised, what so little esteemed in common account, what more neglected and forgotten, than that true heavenly wisdom, which renounces all merit of his own, and is content to be disregarded by the men of this world? This mortified and humble state of mind is what indeed some people profess, and in words commend; but their practice plainly condemns it, and gives the lie to all their dissembled praises. And yet this wisdom, poor and despicable as it appears to common eyes, is that pearl of great price, for which all other possessions are wisely given in exchange: It is that hidden treasure which is always like to continue hid, since it lies low, and few care to give themselves any trouble to find it out.

R E F L E X I O N.

IT is no such easy matter to be a sincere Christian, as some may imagine. 'Tis true, the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light; but but his shoulders must first be fitted to bear it; his mind prepared to do and suffer whatever his profession may call him to; his resolution must be form'd upon new principles; and he must determine to part with whatever before was dear and pleasant to flesh and sense, for riches and pleasures that are, to the world, invisible, and perceptible only by the eye of faith, enjoy'd only by pious and virtuous minds, and valued only by those who set the least value upon the things of this world. And altho' this may be a task very irksome to flesh and blood, yet, when once accomplish'd, yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and all those comforts and consolations which flow from a sense of the pardon of sin and reconciliation with God.

Thus the pleasures which a Christian enjoys in his communion with God, and the communications of the Divine Grace to him, unspeakably transcend all the pleasures of sense, and the gratifications of the natural appetite; and thus it is that the yoke of Christ becomes easy; but still it is a yoke in which he must draw, and a burden which he must bear all the remaining part of his life; he is yoked to innumerable frailties, passions, and irregular affections, which he can by no means get free from, so long as he continues in a state of mortality; he must likewise expect to be loaded with reproach, contempt,

tempt; and all the vile usage imaginable from the tongues and hands of wicked men; and this is a burden he will never be able to throw off, till his body becomes a life-less carcass, and his scrul impassable and unaffected with all the troubles, afflictions, cares, and concerns of this life.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

*Of the Inconstancy of the Heart, and
how to fix it.*

(*Christ.*)

DEpend not, my son, upon any present disposition of mind, with which thou feelest thyself affected, for this is fickle and of short continuance. Variety and change is what men must be subject to, so long as they carry about them the frailties of flesh and blood; and all their endeavours cannot so fix their hearts, as to keep them constantly the same. Sometimes they find themselves disposed to mirth, at other times to melancholy; now they are even and serene, anon all over disorder and confusion; this hour fervent and devout, the next lukewarm and cold; studious and industrious to day, slothful and unfit for business to-morrow; serious, grave, and thoughtful now, and anon again gay and trifling, light as air. But the man who is truly wise, who is actuated by the Spirit of God, gets above this changeable region of the lower world. He suffers not himself to be carried about with every blast

blast and impulse of inconstancy, but settles upon the basis of the one excellent end, which is always first and chief in his thoughts, the port to which he makes, and the compass by which he steers all his designs and actions. For by this method it is very possible for a man to continue unshaken and unmoved, by any gust of inclination from within, or accident from without. The natural changeableness of human affections, being yet more improved by mens own voluntary affections, being yet more improved by mens own voluntary uncertainty, and their proposing no constant end or rule to themselves. Now that intention, which fixes upon God as its only end, will keep men steady in their purposes; and deliver them from being the jest and scorn of fortune. And this in scripture is stiled *a single eye*, because it ever looks and aims but at one object.

The more intent then that eye is in this prospect, and the less diverted from its mark, the firmer and more consistent men are with themselves; and the less impression does any change of wind or weather make upon such careful and wise pilots. But still infirmity prevails in most; and, if some pleasure or profit intervene, they retain so much tenderness for themselves; and their temporal advantages, as to suffer themselves to be diverted from the same vigorous pursuit of their first prize, and allow this fresh one a part at least of their endeavours and desires. They love God, but they would love the world too; and in this state of divided affections pretty much resemble the *Jews*; who, as the Evangelist observes, came to visit *Martha* and *Mary* at *Bethany*, not only that they might have an opportunity of seeing and hearing *Jesus*, but of satisfying their curiosity in gazing upon *Lazarus*, whom he had raised from the dead, *John* xii. 9. It must
there.

therefore be your especial care and business, to compose this distraction of thought, to fix your heart to one purpose, to seek one good, one end, so zealously, that nothing else may come into Competition or partnership with it; to look upon every thing which diverts you from, or slackens you in this pursuit, with an eye of contempt; and constantly to keep your hope, and desire, and love (which are the spring and guide of all your actions) upon Me alone.

R E F L E X I O N.

WHOEVER fancies he shall continue steady and constant in the same temper and frame of mind, has not rightly consider'd his own weakness, the frailties and infirmities of human nature, the innumerable temptations to which he is hourly expos'd, and the strength and prevalence of his own unruly lusts and passions. When a man finds his heart warm'd with a pious fervour in the duties of prayer, meditation, or other religious exercises, he is apt to fancy that he shall never after yield to the enticements of a vain world, that he shall never again set any value upon riches, honour, or preferments, that he will never more indulge himself in the gratifications of sense, but will still keep strict to his duty, and take every occasion to renew and maintain his intercourse and correspondence with heaven and heavenly objects. But, alas! no sooner does the affairs of life oblige him to converse again with the world, but he finds in his heart a sensible abatement in the fervency of his zeal, a strange reluctancy and backwardness

ness in returning to his duty, and no small difficulty in regaining his former pious disposition.

The way then to keep the mind steadily fixed on God and heavenly things, is to implore the divine assistance to enable thee to keep thy heart from wandering, thy mind from being distracted with the cares and troubles of the world, thy affections from being settled on any other objects but God alone; so wilt thou be able to persevere in well-doing, and to finish thy course with joy.

CHAP. XXXIX.

The Happiness of them who love God.

(Disciple.)

IN having GOD, I have all things. For whom can I have in heaven but thee, and what is there upon earth that I can desire in comparison of thee? Psal. lxxiii. O sweet and comfortable words! But this is a sweetness, which none can taste, but they who love the Word of God, and *not the world, neither the things that be in the world,* 1 John ii. 15. My God to me is my all; I have no need to ask more. The men of enlightened understandings find this enough, and they of purified and heavenly affections cannot repeat it too often. When thou, my gracious God, art present, affliction and death are pleasant; for in thy favour is life and joy. When thou art absent, life itself



is a burthen ; for thy displeasure is more terrible than death. Thou makest a merry heart, a cheerful countenance ; in Thee is abundance of peace, and a continual feast. Thou givest me right notions of all events, and rendrest the most afflicting accidents matter of joy and praise to me. Without thee prosperity itself is unwelcome, and I loath my very mercies ; for nothing here below can please our palate, unless thy favour and wisdom give it a grateful relish. To him that feeds delightfully on thee, every bitter morsel is sweet ; but they who want or undervalue that heavenly entertainment, find the most delicious dainties harsh and bitter.

They who are provident for the world and the flesh, are most deficient in the true and heavenly wisdom. The end of carnal wisdom is guilt and death ; and the worldly wisdom pursues vanity and empty pomp. But they who are truly wise, conform themselves to thy example, by a contempt of all earthly greatness, and a resolute mortification of their sensual appetites and passions ; they disdain the shadow, and lay fast hold on the substance ; pass from falsehood to truth, and from body to spirit. These are they who love and delight in God ; and find no satisfaction in the creatures, farther than as they promote the honour, and are subservient to the purposes of the great Creator. The joys they yield are subordinate and limited : Not inherent and natural, but by reflection only ; and every thing should be valued in proportion as it tends to its Maker's use and praise. So vastly unlike, so infinitely different is the pleasure we enjoy from the Creator and the creature ; from the boundless Ocean of Eternity, and the narrow tract of time ; from the
original

original self-existent light, and those faint beams shot down on things here below.

Shine then, O Light eternal, in comparison whereof all created lights are but darkness in a less degree. Illuminate my benighted soul, purge and dispel the clouds of error there, purify my polluted affections, cheer my sadness, enliven my stupid mind and all its faculties; that I may rejoice and triumph, and bask myself in the bright sunshine of thy favour. O! when will that happy, that long wished for hour approach when I shall be filled with thy lustre, and satisfied with thy presence, and my God be my all in all? For sure I am, till that blessed time, my joys must be imperfect. I feel, alas! I feel and lament in my self, some remains of the old man still. Scourged he is, but not entirely crucified; wounded and bruised, but not quite dead. My flesh, in despite of all my assiduous endeavours, continues to lust against the Spirit; and a domestick war distracts and breaks the peace and good government of my mind, which cannot exercise its just dominion without perpetual broils and tumultuous insurrections. But, O thou, *who rulest the raging of the sea, and stillest the waves thereof, when they arise*, come speedily to my assistance, and quiet this storm. Scatter my enemies that delight in blood, and beat them down, O Lord, my defence. Psal. lxvi. Exert thy mighty power, and get thee honour by this conquest. For thou, O LORD, my GOD, art my only hope and helper: O save me, or I perish.

CHAP. XL.

No security from temptation in this life.

(*Christ.*)

DO not imagine, my Son, that in this world thou canst ever be in a condition of perfect safety. Dangers and enemies lay in wait for thee every where. Violence and snares are perpetually employed for thy ruin ; and therefore the weapons of thy spiritual warfare must not be laid aside ; for they are useful and always necessary, during this state of mortality. Cover thy self then with the shield of wisdom, and faith ; for, if thou expose thy person without this defence, the fiery darts of the wicked will easily gall and afflict thee. And, if dexterity and diligence in the use of thy arms be not animated by a mind fixed intirely upon me, and a vigorous resolution of enduring the worst that can befall thee for my sake ; the engagement will be found too hot, and that crown of glory, which is the reward of perseverance, can never belong to thee. Call up thy courage then, and exert thy utmost strength, as occasions of combat shall offer. For to him that overcometh will I given that hidden Manna ; Rev. ii. but misery and destruction are the portion of faint-hearted and feeble, slothful and sleeping soldiers.

If then these are the conditions of thy obedience and reward, consider how absurd it is for them who indulge their ease here, to expect peace and happiness hereafter. In one of the two states enduring must be thy lot ; and therefore a rigid patience, and not soft repose, is what thou should'st

strive for at present. For rest and undisturbed content are not to be had on earth, nor can they be procured by the greatest affluence of any worldly good, but their dwelling is in heaven only, and they are peculiar to the love and immediate fruition of God alone. In obedience to his will, you should contentedly sustain labour and toil, tryals and troubles, distress and anguish of heart, poverty and want, infirmities and diseases, injuries and affronts, scandal and reproach, disparagement and disgrace, punishment and torture. These whet and brighten a Christian's virtue, exercise and distinguish him. These thorns will be woven into wreaths of glory; and to such faithful servants, for their short hardships, I repay an endless recompence; and for the shame, which is soon forgotten, I will give laurels that never fade, crowns always bright, and honours firm and immortal, as my own.

These are the difficulties of this present state, which men are to be upon their guard against from without. But alas! they must not expect always to enjoy peace and satisfaction within. No, even the Saints of old, whose purer innocence and eminent virtues might give them a better title to this tranquillity, yet often found occasion to complain, that *their heart was disquieted, their spirit desolate, and an horrible dread overwhelmed them.* Ps. lv. cxliii. Doubts and scruples, temptations and fears, and cutting perplexities of heart, are frequently the lot of the most excellent persons. But in all these streights the good man behaves himself with meekness and patience, reposing his confidence in God, and humbly distrusting himself, but supported with the hopes of divine grace and favour, to comfort and assist him; and with the consideration, that the *sufferings of this present time are not worthy*

worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them. This was the case of those glorified Saints, whose lives are recorded for thy patterns. And, what pretence canst thou have, to hope for that joy in present, which they so long waited for, and purchased at the expence of sore pains and many tears, and great difficulties; and thought themselves, even thus, well paid? Wait then thy Master's leisure, quit thyself manfully, throw off all impatience and distrust, persevere in faith and good works; think not much to lay out person, life, all for the service and glory of God; and never doubt, but I will one day abundantly reward thee, and till that day comes, will stand by thee to sustain and deliver thee in every danger and calamity.

R E F L E X I O N.

A General, engag'd in war, has a very extensive duty; he must be always upon his guard, as well in the camp, as in the field; as well against the secret ambuscades, as the open attacks of the enemy; and while in garrison, makes preparation for the ensuing campaign. The life of a Christian proceeds much in the same manner; he is continually liable to the assaults of very powerful and dangerous enemies, who attack him either with open violence, or imperceptible snares which they every-where lay to entrap him; and if they find him off his guard, will be sure to set upon him with double fury. He will often find himself vigorously encounter'd with unruly lusts and ungovernable passions, which will raise such a terrible storm in his soul, that, without assistance from above, he will never be able to bear up against it. Afflictions and troubles

troubles of various kinds will bear down upon him from another quarter, and it will require his utmost skill and courage to keep himself from being over-set by them. The temptations and allurements of the world, and the baits of riches and honours, are snares and traps, which it will require his utmost care and vigilance to escape from unhurt.

Since then this is the melancholly condition of every Christian in this state of mortality ; and since he must never hope for a crown without conquest, it surely behoves him to be in a continual readiness to receive the enemy, to be always armed for an engagement, to resist manfully, to bear patiently, to persevere resolutely, to hope in adversity, to be cautious in prosperity, to place his whole confidence in God ; thus will he be able to triumph over all his enemies, even death itself, and enjoy an everlasting crown of glory in the world to come.

CHAP. XLI.

*Have no Regard to the unjust Censures
of Men.*

(Christ.)

MY Son, place thy confidence in God, cast all thy care upon him, and let it be thy chief, thy only concern, to approve thyself to him. When this is done, a man should have but little regard to what the world thinks of him, nor fear the censures of others. He needs no better testimony

mony to his piety and innocence, than his own conscience. To be ill thought of, is sometimes for thy good; it conforms thee to the image of thy Saviour; and if thy soul, like his, be meek and humble; if thou aim not at thy own glory, but his that sent thee, the affliction will not be very grievous, nor too heavy to be born. The opinions of men are as many and as various as their persons; the greatest diligence and most prudent conduct can never please them all. And therefore St. Paul himself, than whom none ever laboured more earnestly to recommend his actions to the good acceptance of the world; *He who became all things to all men*, yet found it convenient to appeal to a higher court, and declared it *a small thing with him to be judged of man's judgment.* 1 Cor. iv. He did his utmost to promote the welfare and salvation of others; but even the utmost he could do, was not sufficient to skreen him from the unjust censures, and perverse misconstructions of men. And therefore he removed his cause, and referred the whole matter to that God who knew his integrity; and vindicated himself from the calumnies and reproaches of licentious tongues, with all humility and invincible patience. Sometimes he heard and passed by their slanders in silence: At other times he asserted his own innocence, and reproved the unreasonable malice of his Accusers: Not so much in respect to his own honour, as to prevent an offence which might be taken from his forbearing to do so; and lest the weak and ignorant should make his continued silence an argument of his guilt.

But was is there so frightful in the condemnation of man? And, indeed, what is man? He lives and flourishes to day; but to morrow he is gone,

gone, and his place shall know him no more. Fear God then, and his judgment; for he is omniscient and everlasting; and the more thou fearest him, the less thou wilt be afraid of any but him. Consider well what damage can come to thee by injurious and reproachful treatment. Alas! they who accuse and asperse thee wrongfully, are much the greatest sufferers by their own malice and injustice. Their slander and detraction can have no influence, can make no impression upon the righteous Judge above. None to thy prejudice, but a sad and fatal one to their own. For, they cannot escape his judgment, who hath declared, that they who judge shall be judged; that they shall have judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy; and that the same measure they mete to others, he will measure to them again. *Matth. vii. 1 Pet. iv.* Let God then be always in thy mind, and have nothing to do with quarrel and contention, nor embroil thyself in troubles and differences, by being over-solicitous in thy own defence. If thou seemest at present to be oppress'd with disgrace and ill reports, which thou hast not deserved; bear thy burthen contentedly. Stain not thy innocence by too deep resentment; nor blemish the brightness of thy crown, by anger and impatience, and eagerness to right thyself. Reflect on me who once endured such contradiction of obstinate and implacable sinners; and am now set down at the Right Hand of the throne of God. *Heb. xii.* Look up to heaven, and remember, there is One, who can make thy innocence as clear as the light, and thy righteousness shine like the sun at noon-day. *Psal. xxxvii.* One, who will consider, not only thy infamy and wrong, but thy manner of bearing it; and the more meek,
more

more injured thou hast been, the kinder and more bountiful a Rewarder thou wilt certainly find me.

R E F L E X I O N.

A good conscience is the best witness a man can have of the sincerity of his actions, and the uprightness of his life. This will be a sufficient support under all the calumnies, slanders, and aspersions with which he may be attack'd by the tongues of evil-minded men. Consider the frailty of human nature, how apt men are to reflect on the conduct of others, and extol their own worth, tho' at the expence of their neighbour's good name; how ready we are to discern a mote in a brother's eye, to discover his faults, to detect his miscarriages, and to censure his errors; but how unwilling to hear or be told of our own. Consider this, and thou wilt find reason to mitigate thy uneasiness at any reproaches and calumnies with which thy character and good name may be false attack'd.

Reflect again, that were it possible that thou couldest conduct thyself with the circumspection and innocence of an angel, and with the piety of a saint, thou wilt not obtain the good word of every one, nor escape the censure of malice and envy. This was the very case of Christ himself, who, tho' absolutely free from sin, whose nature was without stain or blemish, in whose mouth there was found no guile: Yet how was he slander'd, and loaded with the worst reproaches that malice itself would invent, to blacken his spotless character, to vilify his most innocent actions, and to ridicule and scandalize him, at the same time they allow'd that he spake as never man spake, and that his works were such as deserved the highest encomium? If then thy

Lord and Master suffer'd such things, canst thou expect to fare better? If the Apostles, and Saints, and Followers of Christ in all ages, have been us'd in the same manner, what reason hast thou to hope for better treatment? Rest satisfied, and be assured that God will one day vindicate thy innocence, to the shame and confusion of all thy censorious, innatur'd vilifiers and slanderers.

CHAP. XLII.

A Christian must resign himself entirely to God, if he would be happy.

(*Christ.*)

Lose thy life, and thou shalt find it. Renounce thyself, and thou shalt possess Me. Place thy esteem upon nothing, and thou shalt enjoy all things. For I will make thee a recompence with greater treasures, and infinitely increase thy store, when thou hast resigned into my hands all that thou hast and art.

(*Disciple.*) How often, Lord, must I repeat this gift; and what are the instances wherein I must forsake my self?

(*Christ.*) There is no time, my Son, but what is seasonable; and every action, every accident of thy life, furnishes a fresh and proper occasion for doing it. I can admit of no reserves, but expect that thou strip thyself of all, and have nothing left which I have not a title to. For, how canst thou be mine, and I thine, except thou renounce thy
own

own will in every thing, and no property or claim any longer remaining unconveyed over to me? The sooner thou executest this deed, the better it will be for thee; and the more full and express, the more frank and sincere thou art in it, the more favourable will be my acceptance, and the more valuable consideration shalt thou receive. Some indeed there are, who pretend to give themselves; but the conveyance is so clogged with proviso's and limitations, that the title they make is of no value. They resign themselves to God by halves, and are for making their best of the world at the same time. Others again do this without exceptions; but then in difficulties and temptations they repent of their bargain, and revoke the grant. These men make no considerable advances in virtue, nor do they taste the sweets of piety; which consist in a mind free from the world, and in the friendship and familiar conversation of God. But such spiritual advantages cannot, in the nature of the thing, be imparted to any whose affections are not intirely agreeable, and inseparably united to mine. And this requires no less than the absolute resignation of a man's self; and the daily offering of his whole *spirit and soul and body, a holy, lively, and reasonable sacrifice unto me*. I have often said it, and now once more repeat it, That *he who would receive all, must in exchange give all*. Do not then expect, or call in, any thing again; but give generously and chearfully, and depend wholly upon me without doubts or demurs. Me thou shalt have in return, and with me perfect freedom and saving knowledge. Prevail with thyself to resign all, without intent or power of revocation; and pray earnestly, that thou may'st gladly follow Christ in all his sufferings and lowest state; that

thou may'st die to the world at present, and, by so doing, live to me for ever. When thou hast done this, all vain imaginations will be banish'd; lust will disturb thee no more, nor passions ruffle, nor anxious cares perplex thee; excessive fears will no more terrify thee; inordinate desires will sicken and die; sorrow and disquiet find no place; and temptations will try in vain to molest thee.

R E F L E X I O N.

* No man can serve God and Mammon. He who would devote himself wholly to the service of his Master, must, if he expects his service should find acceptance, do it without reserve or exception. The service of God, and the service of sin, are absolutely and eternally inconsistent; and whoever imagines he can indulge himself in the full swing of his lusts; and at the same time be truly zealous for the honour of God and the duties of religion, will, in the end, find himself dreadfully mistaken. To say, if, in compliance with the precepts of religion, I should give up such or such a gainful branch of trade, tho' I know it is fraudulent and dishonest, my family would suffer, and my affairs be ruin'd; what will this avail me when it shall be retorted upon me, that I have set a greater value upon the things of this world, than the things of God; that I have been more anxious for a little trifling subsistence here, than careful of the eternal concerns of my precious and immortal soul?

This we may depend upon, that so long as our affections are placed on external objects, so long God will keep his distance from us, so long will he withhold the comforts of his Holy Spirit from us,

us, and suspend the communications of his love and grace to us; so long as we are the children of this world, we are the children of darkness, nor can possibly enjoy the light of God's countenance shining in upon our souls with the kindly beams of his refreshing love and favour.

CHAP. XLIII.

*How to govern one's self with respect to
the affairs of the world.*

(Christ.)

BE sure, my Son, to be very careful, that business and care take not up too much of thy time and thoughts; but whatever constraint they may lay upon thy actions, and outward attendance; yet keep thy mind always at its own disposal. Do business, but be not a slave to it; and remember, thy prerogative is, to govern, and not to serve the things of the world. Thou art a *Hebrew* of the spiritual seed of *Abraham*; assert thy native liberty. But why do I call thee a free-born son of *Abraham*? Thou art a great deal more, translated out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, partaker of the inheritance of the Saints in light. Coloss. i. So high a birth, such a happy condition should exalt and ennoble thy soul, and inspire thee with resolutions to trample upon the present, and grasp at nothing less than eternity. Cast only now and then a disdainful glance upon this world, as a thing not worth

worth a serious thought ; but keep thy eye immoveable and directly fixed upon heaven, as thy sure prospect, thy main concern. It ill becomes thy quality to dwell upon trifles, or subject thyself to things temporal. These thou must make bend to thy pleasure, submit to and serve thy occasions ; for so their great Creator intended they should, who is the Author and lover of order, and would have every work of his contain'd within its proper post and station.

If at any time thou art entangled in difficulties, rely not upon human prudence, nor trust the false representations, with which thy senses and worldly affections, or the mistaken judgment of others so disposed, would impose upon thee. But remember *Moses*, and go with him into the tabernacle to ask counsel of thy God, *Exod. xxxiii.* There thou shalt often meet a suitable answer, have many thoughts seasonably suggested to thy mind, and return wiser, both for this world and the next, than thou wert before. For this was the course which *Moses* always took in doubtful cases and important exigencies : He made prayer his weapon and refuge ; by it he vanquished many dangers, escaped the malice of enemies and wicked men, detected their devilish designs, and retorted the mischiefs they intended upon their own heads. Now what this tabernacle was to him, thy closet and thy conscience are to thee. Neglect not then by any means to consult this oracle, and implore the directions and assistances of divine grace : For the bad consequences of acting upon thy own head without these precautions, are intimated to thee, by that instance of *Joshua* and the *Israelites* : who are expressly said to have been deceived by the *Gibeonites*, to their great prejudice ; because they gave too easy credit

to

to their fair and flattering pretences, and engaged in a league, without first enquiring of the LORD. *Josb. ix.*

R E F L E X I O N.

A man that would act with freedom and indifference with regard to the world, ought not to rate any thing above its true and intrinsic value ; he should consider that riches are uncertain, pleasures have wings, friends are mortal, honours and dignities precarious, health and ease liable to sorrowful changes ; every thing thou seest, every thing thou enjoyest, is in a continual fluctuation, even time itself is still hastening to put a final period to the short and variable scene of thy life. If upon a view of things in this light, thou canst lift up thy soul to heaven, and place thy trust and confidence in God alone, and resign thyself entirely to the care and disposal of his providence ; if thou canst bring thyself to such a happy frame and temper of mind as this, none of the troubles and vexations thou mayest meet with here will much affect thee, because thou art enabled to look through every affliction, and to discern the fatherly Hand that corrects thee ; nothing shall disturb the tranquillity of thy soul, because thou art persuaded that every dispensation of providence is intended for thy good ; a multiplicity of eternal blessings will not puff thee up, because thou knowest every thing thou enjoyest is subject to the good pleasure of the wise disposer of all things. Thus wilt thou enjoy a serenity and evenness of soul amidst all the noise and bustle of the world ; thus wilt thou act with a generous freedom in all thy dealings and transactions with other men ; and by a patient and resolute perseverance

rance in well-doing, thou wilt at length attain to that happy state of perfection, where all thy powers and faculties shall be entirely at liberty to act to the full extent of their abilities, without controul or opposition:

CHAP. XLIV.

Be not too solicitous about worldly Affairs.

(*Christ.*)

MY Son, entrust thy affairs with me, and I will in due time bless them with a proper and successful issue. But wait with patience the time that I have appointed, and do not anticipate the methods of my providence; for I know how to convert every delay to thy advantage.

(*Disciple.*) LORD, I most willingly commit my concerns to thy care and management; for all that little I am capable of is very insignificant. And therefore I cannot but wish that this sense, to discern to how little purpose all my own pains and contrivances are, might free me from any anxieties concerning future contingences, and dispose me calmly to acquiesce in thy will and good pleasure.

(*Christ.*) Alas! my Son, eager and greedy men covet they know not what. An object at a distance engages their desires, while they behold only the fair and glittering side; but, upon a nearer and more distinct view, enjoyment convinces them, and they grow sick, even of their own desires. For their own desires are various and changeable,
and

and ever veering about to some fresh object. It is therefore of no small moment for a man to forego his own inclinations, even in matters of no great importance. But he who hath attained to the power of doing this in any case whatsoever, is truly free and great above the reach and envy of fortune, and is arrived at the highest pitch of human perfection. Yet even this man will find his virtues called to the test: For the old enemy of souls is ever framing some stratagem to undo good men, and lies in ambush night and day, to catch an opportunity of ensnaring unwary souls. Let then his diligence provoke yours, and be not less solicitous to save yourselves, than he is to destroy you. For this is the sum of thy Lord's command, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, Matt. xvi.

REFLEXION.

MOST reasonable was that command of Christ to his Disciples, *Forsake all, and follow me*; for, it was for the sake of them, and all the sincere followers of him, that he forsook heaven, that he left the transcendant glories and ineffable happiness of his Father's presence; that he condescended to take upon him the nature of man, with all the infirmities incident thereto, sin only excepted; that he suffer'd affronts and indignities from the hands and tongues of evil men; that he became the object of the devil's rage, and subject to the ungrateful usage of a vile Traitor; that he humbled himself to be question'd and tried at the bar of sinful men; and that he submitted himself, O amazing condescension! to the painful, ignominious, and accursed death of the cross! Can we then think much to leave all for his sake? to think nothing our own

when he calls for it? Can we grudge him our best affections? who, for our sakes, sustain'd the weight of his Father's wrath, and stood between us and eternal ruin?

Let us not be too earnest in the pursuit of worldly advantages; *for what shall a man profit if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* What equivalent can ballance the loss of Christ, and the love of God? Let us be but once persuaded that all things relating both to our souls and bodies, are order'd and disposed by the all-wise providence of our gracious Father, and we shall find but little reason to be very solicitous about the affairs and concerns of this life.

CHAP. XLV.

Man has nothing of his own to glory in.

(*Disciple.*)

LORD, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou visitest him? How can he deserve the assistance of thy grace, or the succour of thy favour? What right have I, so vile a wretch, especially, to complain unto my God, if he withdraw his presence, and leave me to my self? Or, if I supplicate and pray for comforts, what have I to alledge in my own behalf? How can I take it ill, if he reject my petitions? I am very sensible that this is all I ought to think, or can pretend to say; namely, that I have nothing, and am nothing, and in my own nature tend to and pursue
after

after vanity and nothing. I acknowledge myself a miserable creature, faint and feeble, incapable of so much as one good desire, till animated and strengthened by thee. Fickle I am, and mutable, subject to infirmities innumerable, and perpetual decays; but thou, my God, art *the same, yesterday, and to day, and for ever*; Heb. xiii. Ever happy, and just, and wise, and good, and directing all things for the best, after the counsel of thy divine will. It were well, if I was but equally disposed to good and evil; but the corruption of my nature, alas! inclines me too strongly to vanity and vice. I too easily fall from my own steadfastness, and am carried about with every shifting wind of time, and chance, and passion.

And yet thus weak and unstable as I am, thy helping Hand can comfort and confirm me. Thy powerful grace, without any human aids, can work wonders in me; can strengthen my resolutions, scatter my fears, and fill my soul with rest and sweet content. If, when I long after greater degrees of virtue and devotion, or if I come to thee for succour in distress, when all other succours fail me, (and all but thine will most certainly prove ineffectual) if then I could but abandon all other hopes, and repose my whole confidence in thee alone; Then might I entertain some expectations of thy favour; then would I wait with joy for the chearful returns of grace and comfort from above. For all my successes are thy free gift, and I myself am a despicable wretch, not capable of performing any good, nor in a condition to merit the least of all thy mercies.

What therefore can I have to glory in, who, till I despise and go out of myself, am not in the least qualify'd to receive assistance from thee? Or how

can I desire the applause and admiration of men? What! Shall I pretend to glory of my weakness, and inconstancy, and nothing? This were a vanity without example, an extravagance beyond imagination. How foolish and absurd, nay, how pernicious and destructive a vice is ambition, which, by undue pursuit of honour, robs us of true honour; and, affecting favour with men, incurs punishment and displeasure from God? for he who strives to please himself, is sure at the same time to offend thee; and loses true substantial virtue, by coveting empty praise. For true honour and virtue consists in glorying, not in ourselves, but in thee, O Lord; in magnifying, not our own attainments or performances, but thy free grace; and in loving and delighting in nothing, but in that only that may advance thy honour.

Not unto me, therefore, not unto me, but unto thy Name be the praise. Ps. cxv. Let not men commend and extol my works, but thy power, which inspired, produced and perfected them: And may this commendation be ascribed so entirely to thy Grace, that not the least part of it may fall upon my concurrence with it. Far be it from me to arrogate any thing to myself; for while I rejoice in thee, I find nothing in myself to glory in, but my infirmities. In them indeed I will gladly glory; because the greater my weakness is, the more visible and manifest is thy strength, which is so conspicuously perfect in it. Let unbelieving Jews seek honour one of another; but I, who profess myself one of the faithful, will seek honour which cometh from God only. John v. For, what is all the fame, the respect, and grandeur of this world, if put in the balance of heavenly and eternal glory, but egregious folly, deceitful bubble, and
alto-

altogether lighter than vanity itself? Therefore let all honour, and praise, all might and majesty be ascribed to thee, O blessed Trinity, my God, my light, my truth, my succour and defence, my refuge and comfort, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

CHAP. XLVI.

Of the Contempt of worldly Honour.

(Christ.)

LET it not trouble thee, my Son, when thou seest others grow great, in reputation and preferment, while thou art overlook'd and despised. Look up to me, and fix thy affections and hopes in heaven, and then the neglect and contempt of men will give thee but little trouble.

(Disc.) Were it not, LORD, for the blindness and corruption of nature, which makes me fond of vanities and trifles, I should have juster notions of these things. For he, who rightly understands himself, cannot but discern, that it is not in the power of any thing without, to do him any prejudice; and consequently, that he can have no reasonable ground to complain of thy providence, however it thinks fit to dispose of such matters. The consciousness of my own sins convinces me, I have deserved, that all the creatures should conspire against me, and make war upon me. To me belongs shame and confusion; but to thee only honour and praise is due. And thou hast instructed me, that to bear contempt, and hatred, and cruel usage, with humility

ty and patience, is the only method of attaining inward peace, and true satisfaction; this is the virtue which must recommend me to thy favour; this is the best predisposition for light and grace, and the surest, strongest band of union with thyself.

CHAP. XLVII.

Happiness is not to be had in human Friendship.

(*Christ.*)

HE that proposes to be happy, by the affection or acquaintance of the best, the greatest man alive, will always find his mind unsettled and perplexed. For even the best and greatest are but mortals; and the effectual remedy against immoderate concern for their being taken away from thee, will be to court the favour of an eternal and immortal friend. Now, the less confidence any man places in any earthly comfort, so much the more will he secure to himself the favour of God. The better he is acquainted with his own vileness, and the less he is in his own eyes, the higher he rises in God's esteem. But they, who vainly imagine that there is any thing good and meritorious in themselves, put an effectual bar to divine Grace. For, this is given to the humble, and the Spirit of God chuses the contrite heart for the place of his peculiar residence. Would'st thou abandon self-conceit, and wean thy heart from all fondness for the creatures

tures, thou canst not conceive what comforts, what overflowing joys I would infuse into thy soul. But, while these employ thy thoughts and desires, thou art diverted from more noble objects, and by being too intent upon his works, losest and forgettest the Almighty Maker. Learn then to subdue thy own will, that thou may'st clearly understand, and freely comply with mine. For any other object, tho' never so trifling and inconsiderable in its own nature, yet, if too highly valued, and immoderately loved, corrupts the mind, and check its aspiring after the Chief, the only Good.

R E F L E X I O N.

A sincere and disinterested friendship is certainly a very valuable blessing, a happiness rarely to be met with; and where it is, it much alleviates the miseries and afflictions that are common to humanity: But when we consider the numberless incidents that daily happen to break the strongest ties of friendship; and that tho' it should be cemented by the most endearing obligations of mutual engagements, yet, by the death of either of the parties, all the pleasures and advantages that they have enjoyed together, must have an end; whereby the survivor must suffer the severest pangs of sorrow, and perhaps go mourning all his days afterwards. But when a man makes religion the basis of his friendship; when he enters into engagements with God, and solemnly devotes himself to his service, to do his pleasure, to obey his commands, to promote his honour, and to be wholly resigned to his will in every station and circumstance of life, he will find him agreeable to his promise, his best friend, and will enter into a covenant with him, every title

tle of which he will faithfully and punctually perform, nor will ever break with thee, so long as thou keepest firm to thy promises and engagements with him.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Be not vain of human Learning.

(Christ.)

DO not, my Son, imagine, that the excellence of a man consists in subtilty of wit, or quaintness of expression. For the Kingdom of God does not lie in elegance of speech, or fineness of parts, but in innocence of life and good works. Let my doctrines be thy principal study; for my words will awaken thy attention, enlighten the understanding, kindle a holy zeal, provoke true contrition, and heal the wounds they make, with the spiritual balm of grace and solid comfort. Let not the ambition of growing wiser and more learned be the end thou proposest to thyself in reading; but read, that thou may'st be qualify'd to practise, and let thy knowledge be manifested by subduing thy vices and passions. For this is improvement indeed, and will turn to better account, than the nicest and most distinguishing skill, in all the controversies and difficult points, that ever employed the tongues and pens of wrangling Logicians, Philosophers, and Divines. For when thou hast run thro' the whole compass of learning, yet all will turn at last upon
one

one single point; and the whole profit of thy pains lies in a very narrow room.

If thou wilt be truly knowing, learn of me; for I am the only Master that teach men knowledge, I give more perfect, more sublime understanding to babes, to the humble and sincere, than all the celebrated sons of art were ever able to do. And those whom I instruct, grow truly wise, are presently enlightned and refined, and, by an astonishing proficiencie in virtue, outstrip all the admired schemes of morality. Wretched indeed are those vain men, who with infinite toil and time, lay themselves out upon the unprofitable curiosities of human wisdom, and take no pains to inform themselves in their duty to me. The hour, alas! will quickly come, when their Master Christ shall come with terrible pomp, and call each man to a strict account, and sound every conscience to the bottom. Then *shall Jerusalem be searched with candles*; Zeph. i. then shall the hidden things of darkness be brought to light; and no man's eloquence or subtilty of arguing shall do him any service, before that all-seeing Judge. I raise the meek, and man of mean sense, in an instant; and teach him at once the grounds and eternal truths, better than a course of many years spent in laborious study, and the most refined methods of schools and universities. I bring men to right apprehensions of things, without any noise of words, without the formality of systems, or vain ostentations of caviling sophistry, or regular disputing. Of me alone men learn to despise the world, to think things present not worth their pains and care, to love and seek those that are heavenly and eternal, to decline honours, to bear injuries and affronts, to trust and hope in me alone, to wish for nothing but my favour, *and to esteem*

esteem all things but dross and dung, so they may win Christ.

Some of my Disciples have made such wonderful improvements under me, as even to speak things above human comprehension ; and grown wiser in solitude and cloisters, than any conversation of learned men, or volumes and libraries never so carefully perused, could have made them. But this is not the case of every man; for I do not communicate to all alike. Some I instruct in common matters, others in abstruse and peculiar notions. And, as the measure and quality of the matter, so the manner of imparting it, is very various. To some I have shew'd myself in figures and parables, dreams and mystick representation; to others I have reveal'd the most important secrets in the most clear intelligible method. Books speak alike to all, but all are not equally qualified to be taught by them. But I, instead of dead letters presented to the outward senses, perform my business within, I fill the mind with truth, suit my self to each man's genius and capacity, search every corner of the heart, understand their most secret thoughts, inspire good desires, promote and finish those desires by bringing them to action, and deal to every one the various gifts of my Spirit, in such kinds and proportions, as I see most useful and seasonable.

R E F L E X I O N.

How triflings and contemptible are the greatest reaches in human knowledge, the highest attainments in the arts and sciences, and the most refined speculations in philosophy, in comparison with the knowledge of one's self, and of divine and heavenly truths with which the pious soul is instructed by
the

the word of God, and the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit enlightening his mind with divine wisdom, and filling his heart with the fear and love of God? The best and truest wisdom is to be wise to thine own salvation; and that knowledge is alone advantageous and beneficial, which best instructs thee in the vanity and emptiness of the greatest human accomplishments; which teaches thee to think meanly of thyself; which informs thee of thy own wretchedness and misery, while in a state of nature; which points out the road to heaven and eternal happiness; which convinces thee of the impossibility of obtaining favour and mercy at the Hands of the Almighty by any merits or works of thy own; which enlarges thy mind for the entertainment of divine objects, and shews thee Jesus thy glorified Redeemer in all his amiable perfection. This is the knowledge, this the wisdom, these the attainments that will be of service to thee at the Great Day, when thou shalt be called to a strict account in what manner thou hast laid out and improved thy talents.

CHAP. XLIX.

*Have as little business with the world
as possible.*

(Christ.)

Content thyself, my Son, with being ignorant in many things, and chuse to live as a man dead, while among the living; one, whose thoughts and affections are mortified to all the world;

world; and all the world to them. Many things are to be overlook'd, as if you saw them not; draw thy mind off from the distracting variety of objects, and fasten it close down to the things that make for thy peace and salvation. In controverted points, 'tis for the most part much better to content one's self with avoiding erroneous opinions, and their vicious consequences, and leave others to the vanity of shewing their parts, (where their difference from thee does not apparently hazard their souls) than to engage in hot disputes, and spend thy precious hours in wrangling and fierce contention. And even in disputes, be not too hot and pertinacious; for, if God and truth be on thy side, and thou canst with comfort appeal to thy Judge above, thou wilt not be much concern'd for the victory, or the approbation of men.

(*Disciple.*) Alas! Lord, what a miserable condition is this world in? How distant from this meek and abstracted temper of mind? Every trifling loss is seriously lamented. A little sordid gain engages mens time, and labour, and thoughts. The day is too short for their vigorous pursuits, and anxious cares break their sleep; while all their spiritual concerns lie neglected and forgotten. Their diligence and study is determin'd to matters of little or no importance; and the one thing necessary is neglected, as if it were not worth a single thought. So vain is man, so totally immers'd in sensible objects and worldly cares, and so contentedly does he perish in vanity and vexation, unless he is made wiser, and his mind raised to better and eternal concerns, by the effectual workings of thy grace in his heart.

R E F L E X I O N.

WHOEVER expects perfection in this life, will find himself greatly mistaken; it is not attainable on this side heaven. If thou hast the largest capacity to comprehend, and the most penetrating judgment to master the abstrusest notions and subtilties in human science, thy knowledge in many things will be still incomplete. If, in things spiritual, thou hast, by divine assistance, arrived to high degrees of Grace and Sanctification, yet if thou wilt but seriously examine the state of thy soul, thou wilt find many imperfections in thy virtue, many sins not entirely subdued, thy affections for the world and things of sense not mortified, nor brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ. But then remember thou art in a state of probation and trial; that perfect knowledge, and immaculate sanctity, belong only to angelick beings and spirits immortalized; but to thee errors and infirmities, so long as thou art confined to the body, and remainest in a state of mortality. Be satisfied then in the station that is allotted thee; do the duties that are required of thee; be daily mortifying the flesh, and every lust that would bring thee into subjection to the power of sin; have as little regard as possible to the things of sense; let thy conversation be in heaven, where Christ, as thy Forerunner, now is, and whither, in his own good time he will bring thee, if in the mean while thou art found diligent in thy vocation, obedient to his laws, and preferring his honour to all temporal advantages.

CHAP. L.

Against a fond and easy Credulity.

(Disciple.)

LORD, be thou my help in trouble, for vain is the help of man. Ps. cviii. How often have I fail'd of succour, and true friendship, where I had most reason to expect it? How often found it, where I had no grounds for such expectations? So vain and uncertain is all trust in man, so entirely does the safety of good men depend upon thee alone. Blessed therefore and for ever adored be that good Providence, which orders and disposes all events to thy weak and fickle, thy ignorant and silly, thy deceitful and deceivable creatures!

Who among all the sons of men ever behaved himself with so prudent caution and exact circumspection, as not sometimes to be over-reached by treachery and trick, and involved in difficulties and troubles, which the sharpest foresight knew not how to discern or suspect! But he who places no confidence in human subtilty, and trusts in God alone, and acts with downright honesty, and a good conscience, is less subject to such inconvenience, than artful and intriguing men: Or if he should happen to be surprized and imposed upon, yet is his deliverance generally more speedy and effectual, and his comforts in the mean while more sensible and supporting. For thou, Lord, never utterly forsakest those who put their confidence in thee. A faithful friend, and such as will stand by us in adversity and want, is exceeding

ceeding hard to be found ; but thou art always the same, and no change of circumstances can make any change in thee, or abate thy affection. Happy is the soul that is built upon the rock, Christ ; were this my case, the fear of the malicious would not distract me, nor the calumnies of the envious disturb me.

But who can foresee all future inconveniencies, or prevent all that he may foresee? And, if the ills we are aware of, and provide against, are so grievous to be born ; how much more severe will be those wounds, whose smart and terror are doubled by surprize? We often censure ourselves for not being wiser, and have reason to condemn our too easy credulity ; that especially, which eagerly assents to the flatteries and applauses of men, and relies upon their mighty professions of friendship and esteem. For, tho' they call, and fancy us to be angels, yet we cannot but be conscious to ourselves, that we are no better than men, frail and wretched men. Whom therefore shall I believe ; whom indeed but thee, O Lord? For thou art truth itself, incapable of deceiving, or of being deceived. But as for men, they are all liars, *Psal. cxvi.* weak and unconstant, frail and treacherous ; especially in what they say, so exceeding fabulous and vain, that it is a point of prudence to suspend our faith, and thou hast wisely taught us to be cautious of their false insinuations. Thou hast forewarned us of their treachery and malice, told us that a man's *enemies shall be those of his own kindred and household* ; and that when men say, *Lo, Christ is here, or lo, he is there, we ought not to believe them.* *Matt. xxiv.* The truth of these predictions I have learnt by sad ex-

experience, and hope I shall grow wiser at my own expence.

Be sure, (says one) you keep this as a secret, which I tell you; and yet that very man in the next company reveals what he had imparted just before, under the seal of secrecy. From such unsincere dealers as these, and from their treacherous way, I beg that thou wouldest deliver me; that I may neither come within their power of betraying and abusing my confidence, nor injure any who trust in me; make me then, Lord, a strict observer of truth, and religiously firm to my word: For what I cannot help resenting, when done to me, it never can become me to put upon any other person. Silence indeed, and forbearing to concern one's self with very few, are the best securities both of peace and a good understanding with the world, and of the inward peace of our own minds. The endeavouring to approve ourselves to the Knower and Searcher of hearts, and not suffering ourselves to be carried about by every blast of idle report, or empty profession, but carefully guarding our conversation, and labouring to conform every thought, word and action to the divine will; these are a good man's safety, his satisfaction, and his wisdom. How sure and calm a retreat does that man make, who chuses to preserve thy favour. by making an escape from pomp and noise; preferring thy approbations before the loudest fame and applause; and voluntarily abandoning those painted follies, whose glittering outsidcs impose upon our senses? Who prefers contrite sorrow, severe virtue, and solitary devotion, before the showey pleasures of the world, or that empty admiration, which is affected by ambition and vain-glory. Praise is indeed the consequence

quence and encouragement of virtue, but it is sometimes so unseasonably applied, as to become its bane and corruption too. For the whole life of man is one continual temptation, and we have a subtle adversary to deal with, who slips no advantage of undoing us. Our praises he improves to his own purposes, by puffing us up with them into pride and self-conceit. And many souls have perished by that virtue's being published and celebrated, which if unknown and unobserved, had grown to mighty perfection; and the possessors of it had been infinitely happy, by the advantage of secrecy and silence.

CHAP. LI.

*Of Trusting in God, when we are evil
spoken of.*

(Christ.)

MY Son, stand fast, and be not terrified with the shocks of calumny and reproach, but make me thy refuge and sure confidence. Alas! what are words but empty sounds, that break and scatter in the air, and make no real, no lasting impression? But if not only report, but thy own conscience also reproach thee; bewail thy guilt, and reform what hath been amiss. But if, upon due examination, thou find no ground for accusing thyself, encourage thyself in innocence, look upon this wrongful judgment as a suffering for God's sake, and bear it accordingly with patience and contentedness. He expects that thou *should'st resist even*

unto blood, Heb. xii. when called to it : But how will that man be able to endure wounds and blows, who is not yet a match for words and affronts ? Enquire a little into the true causes of such impatience, and thou shalt find it a symptom of a sick and indisposed soul. For how can it be otherwise accounted for, than, that thou art yet carnal, and retainest a greater regard for the opinion of men, than can be well consistent with a person who hath renounced the world, and professes to dedicate himself entirely to God ? Whence is reproof so grating and uneasy ? Whence that sollicitous care to invent excuses ? Whence proceeds that forward zeal to vindicate thyself, if not from a dread and abhorrence of that contempt, to which thy supposed mis-carriages would expose thee ? Fondness of honour and reputation is at the bottom, and an inordinate desire to recommend thyself to man's esteem. Which shews, thou art not yet so humble, so resigned, but that a principle of vanity still lurks within ; nor is the world yet dead to thee, or thou to the world.

Attend diligently to my instructions, and the censures of all mankind will not be able to disturb thee. Let them go on in their envy and malice, and blacken thy name after the most spiteful manner that hell itself can practise or invent, yet what art thou the worse ? Can all this change thy person ? Or hath thy head one hair the less for it ? Do but compose thy mind, and resolve to despise it, and all is over. These scandals vanish and fly away, like motes in the sun, and are of no greater signification than what thy resentment makes them. To be provoked with every slanderous word, argues a littleness of soul, a want of due regard for God ; but the brave generous mind, whose all is in God, and who refers himself entirely to his judgment,

ment, despises the terrors and discouragements of men, and lays no stress upon their notions of things. For their notions are frequently rash and erroneous; they seldom do, and sometimes cannot enter into the real merits of the cause; but to me all hearts are open, and from my piercing eyes no secrets are hid. I know distinctly, as well in what manner, as with what intention, every thing is done. Both the person who receives, and he that does the wrong, are under my cognisance; and even the wrong itself is done by my permission; that by this means the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. I shall most certainly make a just and clear decision between the guilty and the innocent; and shall hereafter call both to account; however I may think fit to try them in the mean while, and keep those things in the dark at present, which then shall be published before all the world. And what mistakes soever may prevail now, my judgment will be according to equity and truth; and my sentence, once pronounced, can never be revers'd. Few indeed are capable of discerning the justice of my providence, in suffering the innocent to be traduced, and their upright actions misunderstood. But I do nothing without wise reasons, and neither am, nor can be mistaken in my methods, how much soever short-sighted and inconsiderate men are confounded about them.

Appeal then in all these cases to my determination, and commit thy grievance fully to me, as not only to disregard what other think concerning thee, but even in some measure to distrust thy own judgment concerning thyself. Consider, that I think many things proper for my servants, which they can by no means imagine convenient for themselves. This very perfection preserves a good
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man's temper, in every accident of life ; because he knows, that every accident falls out thus by my direction. This buoys up his spirits against the insults and injuries of calumny and detraction ; and keeps them from swelling into pride and immoderate joy, when his innocence is cleared, and his virtue commended. He knows that God sees not as man sees ; for man judges according to external and fallible appearances, but God searches the reins and the heart, and judges righteous judgments. .

(*Disc.*) O Lord, thou *righteous Judge, strong and patient*, Pl. vii. who art perfectly acquainted with the wickedness of men, be thou my strong rock, my trust and my defence. For even in my own conscience I dare not be too confident ; since many things which to me are either not known, or forgotten, thou hast a perfect knowledge of, and dost exactly remember. I ought therefore in all reproofs and reproaches to submit with patience, even *though my heart condemn me not* ; because thou, who permittest these things, *art greater than my heart, and knowest all things*. John iii. Thus both reason and religion convince me, I ought to conduct myself ; but, if at any time passion and frailty have exceeded in too nice and tender a sense of these things, I beseech thee, pardon what is past, and enable me to be more resigned for the time to come. Thy mercy alone will avail me more than all my laboured excuses ; and pardon is what I rather chuse, than the most confident testimony of my own conscience. For, though I *should know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified* ; for, *he that judgeth me is the Lord* ; the Lord, who will one day *bring to light the hidden things of dishonesty*, even those, which have escaped the offender's own observation. 1 Cor. iv. And, therefore, if thou,
Lord,

Lord, should'st be extreme to mark what is done amiss, no flesh living could be justified in thy sight.
Pl. cxxx. 3. and Pl. cxliii. 2.

R E F L E X I O N.

How peculiarly happy is every sincere Christian in this respect, namely, that however he may be judged and censured by envious, malicious, or fallible men, he has the great privilege of making his appeal to the sovereign Judge of the whole world, who searches the hearts and tries the ruins of the children of men, who knows, and, in his own good time, will vindicate thy innocence from all the calumnies and aspersions with which thy ill-natur'd enemies may vilify thy character, to their utter confusion and thy own eternal triumph? What occasion hast thou then to perplex and fatigue thyself with the lies and reproaches that may be unjustly charged upon thee? They cannot hurt thee. Thy good name, thy fair and honest character, thy pious deeds are all recorded and remember'd by God in that book where neither envy nor malice can ever come to make a blot, from which nothing shall be able to erase thy name, where nothing shall put a false gloss upon thy best actions, as now, sad experience may teach thee, is done. Thou need'st not be afraid of man, or what he can do unto thee, so long as thou hast the happiness to please God, which thou mayest do by confiding in him as thy great and only friend, by conforming thy life to his will, by regulating thy actions according to the rules of his word, and by keeping thy conscience void of offence towards both God and man.

CHAP. LII.

Nothing too grievous to suffer for eternal life.

(Christ.)

MY Son, let not thy labours or sufferings for me, and thy duty, or any other sort of hardship or tribulation in this world, so far abate thy courage, but that my promise may still be a sure anchor-hold of hope; and this consideration ever minister comfort, that I am able to recompence thee not only beyond what thou canst reasonably expect, but even impossible for thee to wish or imagine. Thy labours will not be of long continuance, nor will thy pain and trouble always afflict thee. Wait but a little longer, and look forward, and see how glorious a prospect opens to thy view: How swiftly the end of all thy sufferings hastens; and how suddenly sorrow and tumult vanish away. Even time itself is not of everlasting continuance; and that which is circumscribed within so very narrow a space as this short span of life, cannot in any fair computation be counted long or great. Go on then in thy duty with vigour and undaunted resolution; keep close to thy work in my vineyard, and fill the station I have appointed thee to; thy wages are certain and valuable, for I myself will be thy exceeding great reward. Gen. xvii.

Persist in writing, in reading, in singing, meditation, in devout prayer, in fortitude and patience. For the things prepar'd for them that love God, are richly worth these and greater conflicts; for all thou must do, all thou canst suffer, are in no degree

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worthy to be compared with them. The day is hastening on, and fix'd in my unalterable decree, that shall be adorn'd with the triumphs of joy and peace; that mighty revolution is at hand, when these alternate successions of day and night shall cease; and everlasting uninterrupted light shall shine for ever. There shall be lustre infinite, satisfactions uninterrupted, unconceivable, rest eternal, and out of the reach of any future danger.

There shall then be no place left for that melancholy wish, *O that thou would'st deliver me from the body of this death!* Rom. vii. no occasion for this complaint, *Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Mesbech, and to have my habitation in this barren wilderness.* Psal. cxx. For even the last enemy shall be subdued, and death itself destroyed. 1 Cor. xv. Salvation then and life shall reign for ever; sorrow and anguish, sighs and tears shall vanish away; a crown of rejoycing put upon every head, and thou shalt be ever happy in the sweet society of *Saints and Angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the assembly of the first-born.* Heb. xii.

Oh! could'st thou now but see the heavens open, and with the ken of mortal eye take a view of the bright and everlasting crowns of my chosen; were thy heart large enough to admit a just conception of their trophies and glories, whom once the world despised, and thought unworthy to live upon the earth; thou then would'st gladly embrace their sufferings and reproaches, give up all thy vain desires of worldly greatness, and disdain the perishing pleasures of the present life. Humility and patience would then appear in all their native beauties; and even affliction and ignominy discover such charms, as must attract thy love, and make thee esteem the reproaches of Christ greater treasures and gain than
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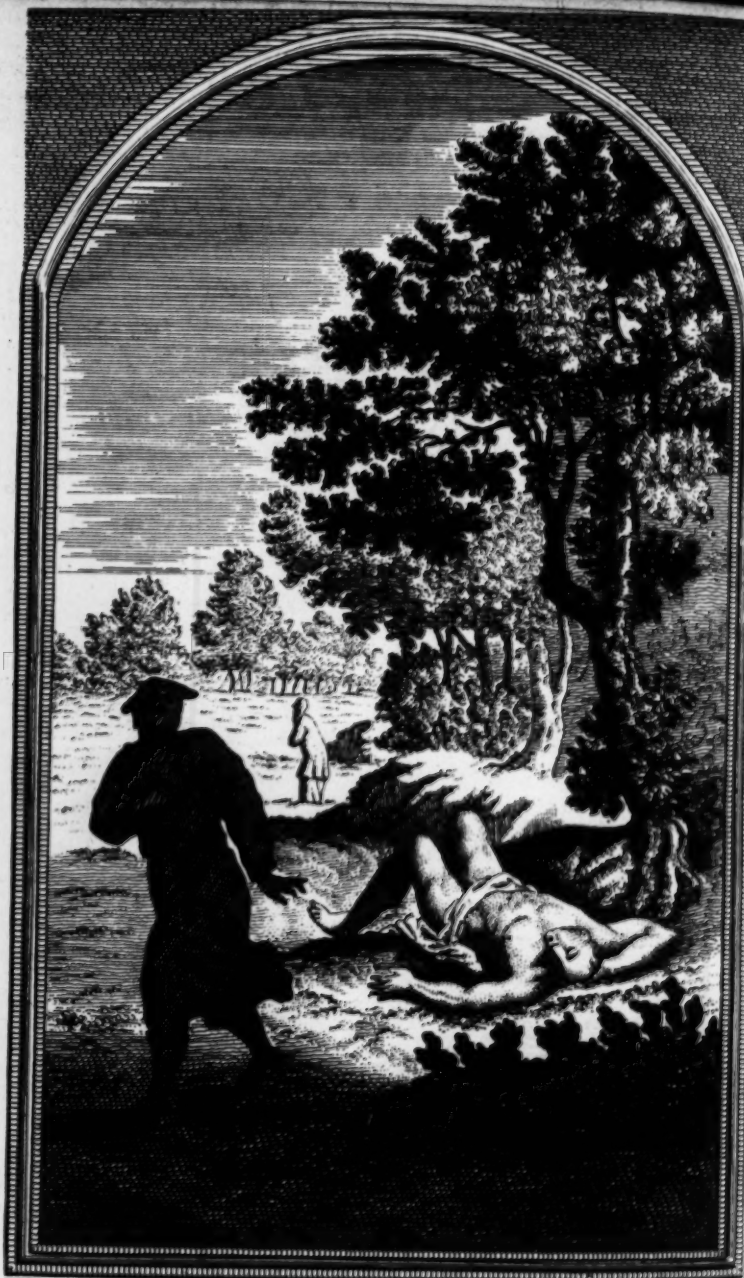
all the majesty and honour, and most-renowned reputation, that a mortal state is capable of.

Attend seriously then to these important truths. For they, if considered and believed in good earnest, will stop thy mouth, and effectually silence all thy complaints. For sure the sufferings of a short moment cannot be judged too dear a price for eternal happiness in exchange. Surely the kingdom of God is no insignificant concern; and when the losing or attaining this lies before thee, nothing can be too much to prevent that loss; nothing a hard bargain that brings a return of such an infinite advantage. Grovel then upon the earth no longer, but stand erect, and lift thy eyes and heart to heaven. See there the blessed effects, the wonderful success of all those sharp conflicts, which my Saints while in the body, underwent; the end of all their trials and adversities, their painful services and pious labours. These mortify'd afflicted men once reputed the *filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*, 1 Cor. iv. the common butt of insolence and malice, are now in perfect joy; their sorrows swallowed up in ineffable bliss and comfort; their dangers changed into secure peace; their labours into ease and sweet repose; their persecutions and unjust accusations before the bar of men into thrones of glory; where they sit and judge the world, and live, and rejoice, and reign with me for ever.

R E F L E X I O N.

If a man would set himself to weigh, as in a ballance, the two different states of Time and Eternity, earth and heaven, and compare mortality, infirmity, and affliction, with immortality, perfection, and happiness, and set the solid pleasures,
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S^T LUKE 10 Verse 31.32.

H. Roberts del.

*The Unkindness of the Priest to the Man whom
he found robb'd and abus'd on the Road*

the uninterrupted joys, the everlasting happiness in opposition to the frailties, the miseries, the temptations, and the continual warfare that every Christian must maintain with the world, the flesh, and the devil, must surely be infatuated to prefer such a wretched condition, so miserable a situation before the heavenly glories, the celestial mansions that are reserved for them that love and fear God. What were the Saints, who now shine in glory, who are now clothed with the white robes of Christ's righteousness, who are now singing songs of triumph to the Lamb who sits on the throne, for the victory he has enabled them to obtain over all their spiritual adversaries; what were they once but poor afflicted creatures, oppressed, distressed, destitute, tormented, despised, vilified, reproached, of whom the world was not worthy? Art thou better than they? Hast thou any better plea to be exempted from the pains and sufferings of this life than they had? Dost thou excel them in any virtues and graces, which made them the admiration of mankind while they lived, and, at their death, gave them a ready and a joyful admission into the eternal mansions of bliss and happiness? Do thou tread in the same path that they trod, and thy journey shall have the same happy and joyful end.

CHAP.

CHAP. LIII.

Of Eternity, and Shortness of this present Life.

(Disciple.)

O Blessed Mansions of the heavenly City! O bright and glorious day of eternal light and blifs! A day that never declines; a sun that never sets, nor is darkened by any succeeding night; but a state always chearful, everlastingly fixed, and secured from change and sorrow, from danger and decay. How do I long and thirst after that happy hour, when this blessed morning shall dawn and shed its beams, and with a wondrous lustre dispel all the darkness and miseries of mortality? It does, indeed, already shine in the hearts and hopes of those good men, whose conversation is even now in heaven: But even theirs is but a distant prospect, and such as, while they sojourn here, presents things only in a glass. The Citizens and inhabitants of those blessed Regions view it with their naked eye; thy feel and enjoy its sweetness, and are all enlightned with its rays; while the distressed sons of *Eve* suffer and groan under their exile, and cannot but lament the bitterness of this imperfect gloomy day, which men on earth call evil. A day but short, and, which is worse, dismal and uncomfortable. For, who can truly describe the pains, the perplexities of body and soul, which are the necessary, the inseparable incumbrances of man's present condition? A condition, wherein he is polluted with so many
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sins, entangled in so many difficulties, surrounded with so many misfortunes, oppress'd with so many fears, distracted with so many cares, disturbed and diverted from his chief concern by so many impertinences, deluded with so many vanities, confounded with so many errors, wasted and worn out with so much toil and trouble; assaulted by temptations, disabled by pleasures, and tortured with great variety of necessities and want?

O! when will there be a period put to this so complicated misery? When may I hope to be enlarged and released from this bondage of sin? When shall my thoughts and desires center, and be for ever fixed, in thee, my God, alone? When may I hope that my joy in thee will be complete, without any alloy of bodily suffering, without any distraction of mind? When shall I rest in firm untroubled peace? Peace from accidents and temptations without, peace from guilt and misguiding, from the solicitations of lust, and the violence of passion within? When shall I behold my Jesus face to face, and contemplate the beauties of his kingdom and glorious Godhead; When will my dearest Saviour be my all in all, and receive me to those blissful mansions prepared for them that love him, and that are loved by him, before the foundation of the world?

Behold! I am here desolate and poor, a stranger and alone in an enemy's country; where wars rage and never cease, and terrible distresses come fast and strong upon me every day and hour. Be thou my comfort in this exiled and forlorn condition. Alswage my pain, and incline thy favour to thy servant, whose parched and languishing soul *gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty land*. Ps. cxliii. Thou alone art able to do this; for, what the unthinking world

calls comforts, are but so many new additions to my burden. I most earnestly long to enjoy, but cannot yet attain my wish. Fain would I embrace and cling to heavenly things, but am held and fastened down to earth, by vanities below, and unmortify'd affections, my mind labours to get above these; but even when the spirit is willing I find the flesh extreamly weak, and my sensual gets the better of my heavenly inclinations.

Thus am I, wretched man, involved in a continual war, and live in contradiction to my self; thus am I my own hindrance and torment, moving different ways, and pursuing different ends and prospects, at one and the same time. How great is my concern and trouble, when I set my mind to meditate and pray, and, in the midst of this exercise, am interrupted by a multitude of worldly and carnal imaginations crowding in upon me? *Go not far from me, O my God, neither cast away thy servant in displeasure.* Scatter these black and gloomy clouds, which intercept my vision of thee, by the brightness of thy lightning; thunder upon them from heaven, *cast out thine arrows and discomfit them.* Re-unite my broken and scattered thoughts, help me to forget the things of this world, to reject and despise, and effectually drive away all sinful imaginations. Assist me, thou substantial Truth, and fix me on a sure foundation, that no blast of vanity may shake and unsettle my heart. Diffuse thy heavenly sweetness through my soul, and drive away all nauseous, unsavoury, and impure affections; for these cannot stand before thee.

Particularly, gracious Lord, I implore thy compassion upon my infirmities; and mercifully impute not to me my many wandring thoughts in prayer. For there, I must with grief confess, my dis-

distractions are great and frequent; and I am often least of all in that place, where I stand or kneel: Thus, while my body is before thy footstool, my mind is hurried away I know not whither. And this is a very melancholy reflection, such as gives me occasion to suspect, and deeply bewail myself; since where my thoughts are, there properly and really am I; and where my thoughts settle and delight to dwell, there, no doubt, is the object of my affection and concern; and that, which either natural disposition or long custom renders most agreeable, that to be sure, is most familiar, and comes continually uppermost. All this I collect from that observation, which thou, Eternal Truth, hast left us, that *where our treasure is, there will our heart be also*. Matt. vi.

This then is the rule by which I try and know the bent of my heart; if I love heaven, the thoughts of it will be frequent and delightful to me. But if I love the world, the effect of this will be, that I shall feel excess of joy in successful events, and be as immoderate in my grief for those that are otherwise. If I love the flesh, wanton and carnal imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with satisfaction; but if I love the spirit, I shall find in spiritual objects a grateful relish, and have in them a delightful repast. For this my own senses and experience assure me, that what I love most, I am best pleased to be entertained with, most earnest to hear, and forwardest to talk of, most careful to remember, and to preserve deep and lasting impressions of upon my mind. And therefore though I cannot attain to it so fully as I wish and strive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire the happiness of them, who can forsake all, and

and stick to thee alone; that commit a holy violence upon their natural inclinations, crucify the flesh, and with a pure unfeigned zeal, and a clear conscience, can offer holy, fervent prayers, a spiritual and unblemish'd sacrifice; where all without are not suffer'd to enter, and all within is composed. These men, so firmly intent upon thee and thy service, are fit to praise thee with those angels, whose refined excellencies they so happily aspire after, and to whose blessed society thou wilt one day exalt and admit them.

CHAP. XLIV.

*Of the desire of eternal Life, and the rewards
of them who contend valiantly.*

(Christ.)

MY Son, when thou feelest thy soul inflamed with an earnest desire of eternal happiness, and thinkest long to be set at liberty from this prison of the body; that thou may'st be blessed with a nearer and more distinct prospect, a perfect, full and uninterrupted fruition, of my brightness and majesty; set open all the avenues of thy soul, and greedily receive the holy inspiration. Express thy humblest thanks to God, and be duly sensible of his goodness, who so bountifully deals with thee, visits thee with his mercy, supports and strengthens thee with his grace, and raises those affections up to heaven, which have a fatal innate tendency to immerse thy

thy soul in earth, and flesh, and sense. For, thou mayest assure thyself, no reasonings or endeavours of thy own have power to effect so good a work, or to create those spiritual Inclinations; the finger of God is in them, and they are owing to no less noble a cause, than the free and bountiful gift of divine grace and favour: The design of which is to advance and exalt thy virtues; to render thee humble and modest, with reflections upon the strength of another made perfect in thy weakness; to fit thee for future trials, and severer conflicts; to engage thy affections, and encourage thy perseverance, in the faithful service of so gracious, so bountiful a Master.

Nor let thy spirits be cast down, my son, if this be not done with all that zeal and perfect resignation of a heart entirely undivided, which thou could'st wish. For, as in common fire there will always be some smoke; so in those holy flames many men are sincerely desirous of heavenly things, who yet cannot absolutely divest themselves of carnal affections, nor be free from all temptations. And therefore quite other views will often interpose, as well as that of promoting God's glory only, by those good actions, for which the assistances of his grace are sought, and earnestly implored, of this thy own experience convinces thee by various instances, in which thou seest no reason to suspect thy own integrity. Nor will all that be condemned at the last Day, which was attempted with a mixture of some desire to promote thy own advantage. Only beware that this desire prevail not so far, as to incline thee to prefer what may contribute to thy profit or delight, before those things which will procure my favour and acceptance, and be for mine and religion's honour. For
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a wise and confiderate Christian, my will is always prefer'd above his own desires, or any the most tempting object; and if it reign not in his heart alone, yet it always sets supreme, and overrules the rest. *I know all thy desires, and thy groanings are not hid from me,* Ps. xxxviii. Thou would'st this instant be admitted into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; the happy and eternal mansions of thy heavenly Father's house are thy lodgings and delight; and *as the hart panteth after the water-springs, so doth thy soul pant and thirst after me.* Ps. xlii. But as yet thou art not ripe for these joys; that welcome hour is not come; for this life is the time of warfare, and action, and trial, and not of rest and joy, and triumph; and thou must content thyself to wait patiently, till the Kingdom of God shall come in perfection.

The condition of mortals upon earth, is a state of exercise and discipline; the joys they feel are comforts and supports, not full and perfect happiness; they are given not to satisfy, but only to sustain them. And therefore accept them as they are, and use them to their designed purposes; that by them thy constancy and patience may be preserv'd from sinking under the weight of any difficulties, which either the doing or suffering things, to which frail and corrupt nature is averse, may at any time expose thee. For the change of a man's self is a very laborious undertaking, and yet this must be done. The flesh with its affections and lusts must be crucified, a new heart and a new spirit introduced, many things done which are very opposite to a man's inclinations, many omitted and let alone, to which he is strongly disposed. Others thou shalt often observe crown'd with success, when
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thy own no less painful endeavours are defeated and disappointed; others deem'd as oracles, when thy better and wiser advice is disregarded and despised! others will suffer long, and at last obtain their desire; thou, perhaps, tho' equally patient, equally fervent and zealous in thy application, art dismiss'd with a repulse; others be great in fame or general esteem, while thy more deserving virtues are entirely disregarded; others caressed, preferr'd, trusted in matters of consequence, and looked upon as useful and necessary, while thou art reputed a useless and insignificant person. These mistaken or partial judgments of men, will grate hard upon human nature; but even these will turn to good account, if born with meekness, with modesty, and silence. For these are the very methods by which God puts the fidelity of his servants to the trial; 'tis thus that he discovers whether they have gained a victory over nature and themselves. And no sort of mortification is attended with happier effects than that which exposes men to the sight and suffering of things, to which their own minds are most reluctant. Especially, when what they must necessarily think is most unfit, most absurd and odd, constrains them to act contrary to their own sense, and submit to a higher power, without any reserve to the private judgment of their own reason in the case. This indeed is very difficult, and a perfection of submission not easy to be compass'd; but, did men rightly consider, how vast the advantages of a temper so resigned are at present, how glorious the reward of it hereafter, and how quickly the troubles it exposes them to will end in that reward; the comforts of such discipline would be sensible and great, and they would even find pleasure in their afflictions and temptations, when they are sustained

with so pure, so bright a prospect, of the mighty, the approaching recompence.

For this short, empty pleasure, which for my sake thou now chusest to decline, shall be compensated with solid and everlasting joy in heaven : And there thy largest wishes shall be gratified ; there thou wilt find plenty of every thing that is good ; fruition perfect and secure, free from the least allay of fear, or possibility of future losses. Between thy will and mine there shall then be a perfect harmony ; no opposition there, no obstruction ; but every thing shall conspire to fulfil all thy heart's desire, and render thy happiness as complete, as a finite nature is capable of. Thy present ignominy, if born with patience, shall there be paid with brighter glory ; thy mourning weeds exchanged for roses of light and joy ; and he who sets here in the lowest place, shall there be seated on an eternal throne. Think it not therefore too grievous a task, to humble and submit thyself to the capricious humours of men, with whom thou art conversant in this world ; but rather to compose thy mind, and order all thy actions, as chearfully and meekly to comply with the commands of thy superiors, the desires of thy equals, the requests of thy inferiors, to do for all what lawfully thou mayest, and to suffer patiently whatever they shall, but ought not, to do to thee. Let vain men pursue vanity, leave them to their own methods. Let them place their glory and happiness in such objects, as their own mistaken judgments shall direct them to. Let them admire, and above all things covet a celebrated name, and popular applause : But do thou place thy excellence and honour in the contempt of thyself, thy diligence in complying with my commands, thy zeal

in seeking and advancing my honour and kingdom; and let this be first and chief in my desires, that *whether thou live, thou may'st live unto the Lord; or whether thou die, thou mayest die unto the Lord; so that whether by life or death, the Lord Jesus may be magnified in thy body.* Rom. xiv. Pl. i. 20.

R E F L E X I O N.

How different is the fate of sincere Believers, from that of worldly unregenerate men? The first are almost continually agitated with troubles, oppress'd, tyrannized over, and insulted by the great wicked men of the world, scandalized and abused by ill tongues, mal-treated and toss'd about upon the earth, as if they were not worthy of a place upon it; they live without honour, die in obscurity, and their names, and even their memories are soon forgotten and lost in oblivion: Whereas monuments are raised to perpetuate the names of those that have been greatly wicked, who have plunder'd nations, and laid half the world desolate, whose ambition for honours has been boundless, their avarice insatiable, their lust after sensual pleasures unsatisfied; these are the men whose very vices are esteem'd as virtues, their follies and extravagancies reckon'd wit and agreeable humour, their knavery and cunning accounted consummate wisdom, and their voluptuousness elegance and a polite taste. But should we draw the veil, and take an awful view of the different mansions, prepared for these different sorts of men in the other world, how strangely would the scene be changed! There we should behold *Dives*, who once wallow'd in all kinds of voluptuous delights, envying the infinitely happier condition of the beggar *Lazarus*; there

the *Casars* and *Alexanders*, at whose nod the world once trembled, would give all their glories and conquests to change condition, with the meanest Saint in heaven. Such considerations are surely sufficient to support us under all our labours and toils, our afflictions and troubles, pains and sorrows, vexations and disappointments, since the afflictions of this life bear no proportion to that reward which the faithful persevering Christian shall meet with at the great day of retribution.

CHAP. LV.

An Act of Humiliation, in Time of Adversity.

(*Disciple.*)

BLessed be thy Name, O Holy Father, for that wisdom and goodness, which performs all thy will; for what thy will decrees, cannot be otherwise than good and wise. Give me grace, I beseech thee, to rejoice, not in my self, or any other, but in thee alone; for thou art my only hope and crown, my joy and glory. All I have I received at thy bountiful Hand; bountiful to a most worthless creature, who neither could procure, nor merit the least of all thy mercies: And thou, by giving and compleating all, hast not lost thy property and right in all, which by thy means I enjoy or do. For what am I, alas! but a poor helpless wretch? acquainted with misery from my very cradle, and wasted with trouble and vexation;

tion; my face is furrowed with tears, and my heart perplexed and broken with doubts, and sorrows, and vehement passions. I pray, and most earnestly long for the blessing of peace, that peace and inward consolation, which thy children feed and feast upon. If thou wilt please to fill my soul with this, it will overflow with joy and praise, and continually breathe out holy hymns to the honour of thy Name. But if thou shouldest hide thy face, as sometimes thou seest fit to do. I find myself unable to run in the way of thy commandments; and, prostrating myself in the anguish of my soul, I beat my breast, and wring my hands, for the loss of that light and comfort, that strength and protection, which I experienced, while under the shadow of thy wings, and defended from the assaults of sorrow and adversity.

Righteous Father, (then say I) the time is come when thou art pleased to try me, but even now, and at all other times, praised be thy Name. Dearest Father, it is very meet, that now thou call'st me to it, I should suffer in obedience to thy will. Most honoured Father, this is the hour, even that important hour, which thou from all eternity hast ordained, to be the season of my outward affliction and inward discomfort as the instrument of endless life and joy to me: But tho' this heaviness may endure for a night, yet light and glory will return in the morning. This, Holy Father, is thy own appointment, and what is thy will shall always be accomplished. For even this suffering in the present life is a mark of thy favour and friendship; the returns, the instruments, the manner, the continuance of my afflictions, are all of thy permitting; for nothing is or can be done without thy Providence and direction, without
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some wise and excellent design. Even I myself am sensible, *how good it is for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes*, Ps. cxix. and utterly discard all pride and carnal confidences. By the shame and self-reproach I laboured under, I have been taught to expect relief from God, and not from man. And all my afflictions put me upon contemplating the unsearchable depths of thy providence, which, with a wonderful mixture of justice and equity, layeth these burdens upon good and bad, without any nice or distinguishing marks of love or hatred in this present world.

I will therefore render the most unfeigned thanksgiving to my God, for his marvellous kindness in not sparing the rod, when it was convenient for me: I acknowledge his mercy, even in the pains and crosses, and sorrows I have endured, whether of mind, or body, or estate; and yet much more, for those refreshments and remedies, which thou alone hast graciously afforded me. For, vain is all the help of man; but thou art the true, the powerful Physician of souls, thou woundest and healest; thou bringest down to the gates of hell, and raisest up again. Deut. xxxii. Thy chastisement shall teach me wisdom; thou shalt beat me with the rod, and I shall not die. Behold me, Lord, most willingly submitting to thy discipline; O strike, and spare not, so thou bend my stubborn heart, and bring down my proud spirit, and make me tractable and obedient. I, Lord, and all that I have are at thy disposal, put forth thy Hand and touch them as thou plearest. For of this I am persuaded, that, how grievous soever these temporal crosses may be, ye better it is to feel the weight of thy Hand here, than hereafter. All things

things are naked and open to thee, even the most secret recesses of our hearts; thou knowest the things that will be before they appear; and needest not that any should inform thee what is done upon earth. Thou seest what will contribute most to my improvement in virtue and goodness; how great and good effect distresses have, to scour the rust from our unactive minds, and brighten all our virtues. Take then, O my God, thy own measures; I only entreat thee, that thou would'st not disdain, and give me over, and think me unworthy thy care, for those blemishes and misdemeanors of my life, which none are better acquainted with, which none indeed are thoroughly informed of, but thou the Searcher of hearts alone.

Work in me, I beseech thee, a true amendment: Instruct me in all things proper for me to know; dispose me to love all things deserving my affection; to think, that every thing is worthy my praise, in proportion as it pleases thee; to esteem nothing highly, but what is precious and honourable in thy sight; to look with a generous disdain and contempt upon all that thou thinkest vile. Let me not, I entreat thee, judge by outward appearances, the seeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, which are subject to numberless delusions and mistakes; but give me a right judgment in all things, whether they relate to this or another state, to the outward, or the inner man: But above all, let it be my peculiar care to acquaint myself with thy will concerning me. Men, who form their judgment according to sense, often err; Men, who place their affections upon the sensible objects of this world, are frequently disappointed and miserable: For, is
a man,

a man, for instance, one jot the better, because he is grown greater in other men's esteem? Is common opinion the standard of merit? Nothing less. Here every man abuses his fellow: The cheat recommends another who is as great a cheat; the vain man extols the vain; the blind misleads the blind; the weak supports the weak; and all the while, by empty undeserved commendations, each brings a true reproach upon the other, while he praises him against sense and reason. For after all, these praises are but words without any significance? nothing more than air and empty sound; for every man is just so much, so good, and neither more nor less, than he is in thy account only.

CHAP. LVI.

*Be content with humbler Acts of Virtue, when
Strength is wanting for greater.*

(*Christ.*)

MY Son, do not suppose that thy zeal can always be equally fervent, or thy mind capable of transport and close contemplation upon heavenly objects at all times. Thou carriest about with thee a load of infirmity and corruption, which will frequently damp the clearest flames of devotion, darken thy mind, and check its noble flights; and make thee know and feel, that mortal flesh and blood is a heavy, but inseparable incumbrance upon a rational and religious soul. While men are in the body, they must necessarily feel and groan under

under the weight. And groan they ought indeed, when they seriously consider, how great an interruption this is to their attendance upon, and entire dedication of their time and thoughts, to God and heavenly objects. These they must be content to dwell upon as much as may be, by snatching all those happy intervals, which leisure and a good temper of mind allow them.

But when the soul is disposed for nobler exercises, when cares or infirmities press hard upon it, let it not be unactive. Variety is here of use; and works of a lesser value in the scale of virtue must be recurred to; that thou may'st be always employ'd, and still waiting for the happy hour, when I shall return and visit thee with larger measures of my grace. Bear with meekness the present discomfort and incapacity, the dry and barren state of thy soul, till I send my refreshing dews, and infuse a principle of fruitfulness, that shall be succeeded with a product of greater plenty and perfection. For I can soon make thee forget thy past troubles, and satisfy thy mind with the fulness of peace. I will open for thee the spacious plains of Scripture, that thou may'st be enlarged, and run the way of my commandments in liberty; and, with a soul full of joy and inward exultation, say, *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us.*

R E F L E X I O N.

How desirous soever a Christian may be to attain to a state of uninterrupted joy; or however willing he may be to be always employ'd in the most exalted and rapturous duties of religion; when he

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thinks to take his flights towards heaven, he finds some corruption drawing him towards the earth, and casting a damp upon his most lively and vigorous piety ; some unexpected trouble, some sudden and unlook'd for affliction or disappointment in his family or secular concerns, cool and abate his holy fervour, drag him away from all his spiritual consolations, and overwhelm his soul in sorrow and distress. And, as an addition to his affliction, God is pleas'd sometimes to withdraw the sacred and consolatory influences of his Holy Spirit, and leave the soul in darkness and spiritual desertion. During these times of trouble and affliction, whether temporal or spiritual, the Christian has many virtues and graces to exercise, which are as necessary to his character and improvement in holiness, as those which give him nearer views of heaven, and ravish him in the contemplation of immortal things. Patience, humility, meekness, self-mortification, resignation to the will of God, and other acts of humble piety ; these are as much the duties of a Christian, as requisite to prepare him for the enjoyment and society of Angels and glorified Spirits in a future and immortal state, and recommend him to the love and favour of God, more than all the raptures and extacies of a high-strain'd devotion.

CHAP. LVII.

*Correction, rather than Comfort, is properly
our Due.*

(Disciple.)

LORD, I must needs with shame acknowledge myself wholly unworthy thy comforts, or any part of that care thou art pleas'd to take of my

my soul; and therefore I have no manner of pretence to complain of hard usage, or injustice, when thou withdrawest thy grace, and leavest me to myself. Whole seas of tears could not so cleanse my polluted soul, as to render it pure enough to merit the blessed influences of thy Spirit. Scourges and indignation are the portion of a wretch, who by so many and such enormous transgressions hath offended thy Majesty. The more therefore I reflect upon my own sinfulness, the clearer and juster notions I have of thy free undeserved mercy. For, merciful thou art, even to astonishment, since thou exprestest so tender and affectionate concern for the work of thy own hands; who thus publicly hast manifested the riches of thy grace in the vessels of mercy, and extendest thy bounty to those who have no right to demand, nor recommendation to induce thee to it.

But, if we could pretend some claim to comforts, yet how could we expect such divine, such incomparably sweet and noble marks of thy favour? So very unlike, so much superior to any human helps or encouragements? For how could I expect the Bread of Life from Heaven? Good works I have none that I can plead; but the least reflection even amazes and confounds me with sins innumerable, brought to my remembrance. My eager proneness to evil, and shameful sloth and backwardness to reformation and goodness, are of themselves so apparent, that should I endeavour to cloak them, the attempt must needs be vain; for thou, the Searcher of hearts, art privy to them; thou canst disprove me, and no mortal can be found, who could offer any thing in my vindication. What then can I justly lay claim to, but hell and everlasting flames? I own with grief and shame, that reproach and con-

tempt are my due; and that I am unworthy to be named among thy sons, or even thy meanest servants. Nature indeed is exceedingly averse, and cannot without reluctancy acknowledge its own vileness and guilt; but I will offer violence to my native pride, and freely confess my sins, that thou may'st shew thy justice and faithfulness, in a full and free pardon of those faults which I so freely confess.

But where shall I find words fit to express so miserable a condition, or how shall so vile, so polluted a creature apply to thee for pardon? I know no other terms than these, that become my mouth.

“ LORD, I have sinned, I have done wickedly.
“ Mercy, thou Judge of quick and dead, Mercy,
“ or I perish. Defer thy sentence yet a little longer, and grant me some time at least to bewail
“ my misery, before I be swallowed up in darkness, and go into a land, black with the terrors
“ of the shadow of death. *Job. x.* What other reparation dost thou expect, and indeed, what
“ other can be had from men laden with guilt and
“ infirmity, than that they should seriously bewail,
“ and humble themselves for, their mighty and
“ multiplied provocations? From hence all our
“ hopes of pardon arise, here the first seeds of a
“ reconciliation take root; the joy of a peaceful
“ conscience is sown in tears; the acknowledgment
“ of our weakness and inability is the first step towards repairing our loss, the first defence against
“ the wrath to come; and in these melancholy solitudes the gracious God and penitent soul meet
“ and embrace each other. A broken and a contrite heart is an acceptable sacrifice; *Pf. li.* and
“ thou, in marvellous condescension preferrest it before the odours, the sweetest incense, or whole
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“ hecatombs of burnt-offerings. Of this that precious ointment, whose perfumes, when it anointed thy holy feet, filled the whole house, was an emblem; for thou, O Lord, never didst, or ever wilt despise that soul which is afflicted with a sense of sin. Contrition and humility are our sure refuge from the rage and malice of our spiritual adversary; and tears of penitence are that purifying stream, which cleanses us from the stains and blemishes of our defiled souls.

CHAP. LVIII.

*The Grace of God dwells not with Men
of worldly Minds.*

(*Christ.*)

THE tokens of my love are of a nobler kind, than that they should condescend to be rivall'd by the blessings of this world; for the joys of heavenly comforts disdain to mix with the comforts of earth. If then, my son, thou desirest to be replenished with my benediction and grace, all that obstruct its free possession of thy heart must be effectually discarded. Seek retirement, and prefer private communion with God, before all the diversions of human society. Esteem no company so agreeable as thy closet and thy devotions; and there, by fervent prayers, pour out thy soul alone, that thy zeal may be quickned, and thy peace of conscience secured. Let the whole world be trifling in thy esteem, and account it a greater honour to be
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called and chosen of God, than any advantages thou canst have from fortune or advancement. For, be assured, thy soul cannot admit of two such different affections, as the love of me, and transitory pleasures. The most dear friends and intimate acquaintance must not stand in competition with me; but they who will be mine in good earnest, must follow the Apostle's advice, and behave *themselves as strangers and pilgrims in a world which must shortly be dissolved*, 2 Pet. iii. And when that time shall come, or their own dissolution approaches, the joy and holy trust of that mind, which sets loose to all things here below, is more blessed, than words can express.

But to live thus abstracted and disengag'd from the world, is a perfection not to be attained by every common man; nor can the sensual person taste the delights, or enjoy the liberty of a true spiritual state. For this requires us to keep a distance from all external objects, that those things, human nature most tenderly loves, should be renounced; nay, even that himself should be so; for every man is his own worst enemy, and the most threatening dangers rise from within. He that hath gained an absolute conquest over himself, will find no mighty difficulties in subduing all other opposition; and this is a compleat victory indeed. And when the sensual appetite readily submits to my will, this man is master of himself and all the world. But they, who would aspire to this perfection, must set out with good resolution, and lay the ax betimes to the root of the tree; that no darling sin, no corrupt or inordinate affection, may be left standing. For all that bitterness and sin, which is necessary to be hewn down, in order to a complete reformation and heavenly purity of heart and life, are but so many branches

branches of that corrupt stock, the irregular love of a man's own self. And when that stock is killed and cut down, a solid peace and uninterrupted happiness are the consequents of such mortification.

The only reason why so many continue still biassed by sensual affections, and find themselves unable to soar above themselves and the incumbrances of the world, is, that very few have attained to the skill of dying to their own inclinations, and divesting themselves of narrow and selfish designs. For he who would converse freely with God, must first bid adieu to all carnal and immoderate desires, and get loose from those intanglements, which clog and fasten down the soul to the earth. They who will retain a fondness to any created being, by minding temporal things, shew, that they are content to set up their rest, short of heaven and God himself. *Set therefore thy affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for no man is sufficient for the service of two masters; nor canst thou love me and mammon both,* Matt. vi. 24.

R E F L E X I O N.

THE Work of God in the soul, and the communication of his grace to a mind truly enlightened, are of that pure and spiritual kind, that they will admit of no commixtures of sense, or any of those things that nature, in its unregenerate state, is so fond of. The views and interests of a sincere believer, are now wholly changed from what they were before his conversion. 'Tis true, he still seeks after riches, honours, and a great name; but of what kind? The riches he now most earnestly pursues, are the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, the pardon and remission of his sins, the virtues and
graces

graces of faith, hope, patience, charity, brotherly love; with which, if he can furnish the treasure of his heart, he esteems himself richer than if he had all the gold and silver that was once in the possession of *Solomon*. He is, indeed, ambitious of preferments, but it is of those who are admitted into the glorious privileges of the sons of God; of such as are distinguished from the rest of the world, by being made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ in his glorious and everlasting kingdom, where he shall be advanced to a throne, and be honour'd with a crown, and placed on the Right Hand of the Almighty Majesty of Heaven and earth. He is likewise more than ordinarily careful that his reputation and character be distinguish'd from the rest of the world. He endeavours to establish his name on the foundation of a good conscience, a fair and unspotted life and conversation, a zeal for the honour of God, and service of religion, by excelling others in virtue and goodness; and if by these means he can at last secure to himself a name and a place among the Saints in light, he will freely resign his pretensions to all the fame and glory that the great men of the world are so ambitious of. Happy is that man who can make such a due estimate of things spiritual and carnal, as to prefer heaven and his interests in the love and favour of God, before all the shining vanities on earth, and all the delusive pleasures and enjoyments that are so highly valued and esteemed by the generality of the children of men.

CHAP. LIX.

The different Motions of Nature and Grace.

(Christ.)

MY Son, be careful to distinguish between Nature and Grace, and nicely to observe their different tendencies and prospects. For these in themselves are so very distant, so contrary to each other, and yet withal so intricate, that they require a spiritual and enlightned understanding, exactly to discern them. All men agree in the general desire of good. This is the spur and spring of every word and action; but that which produces so very different effects from the same original cause, is that men frequently mistake shadows for substances, and are imposed upon by false appearances of good.

Nature acts cunningly, allures, ensnares, and cheats those that attend to her wiles, and proposes the gratifying herself, for the end of all she does. Grace deals candidly and sincerely, complies with no evil, puts no fallacy upon men, does all with a view to God, and rests in him, as its supreme and only end. Nature declines death and sufferings; hates trouble and sorrow, subjection and obedience; whereas Grace is exercised in continual mortification and self-denial; chuses to be overruled, and to submit; nay, restrains even lawful and innocent liberties; does not aim at dominion and superiority, but chuses to live in a state of humility and subjection; and thinks no hardship, no compliance, uneasy, for the sake of God and a

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good conscience. Nature is selfish, and always reckons up the profit that every action may bring to the person that does it; Grace disregards all private gain, and aims chiefly to promote the publick good. Nature delights in honours and preferments, in a celebrated name, and the applauses of men: Grace ascribes all the honour to God, and thinks that good actions are well rewarded, if they meet with his acceptance and approbation. Nature dreads ignominy and contempt: But Grace accounts it matter of great joy to be exposed and vilified in a good cause. Nature is pleased with ease and indulgence, and freedom from bodily rest: Grace is always active, and undertakes business and toil with chearfulness. Nature is charmed with beauty and curiosity, and contemns things that are mean, and vulgar, and common: Grace is best pleased with such as are plain and low in the esteem of the world, disdains not things that are unpalatable, nor thinks herself a jot the worse, for the want of outward gayeties, and ornaments. Nature aims at transitory enjoyments, is fond of wealth and increase, tenderly affected with losses and disappointments, and provoked to the last degree with insolence and reproach: Grace keeps eternal advantages in view, neglects those that are fading and perishing, sustains losses with evenness of temper, endures contempt and scandal patiently. For these, she rightly judges, are things of no mighty concern, to one whose heart and treasure are in heaven; a place, where they are safe, and no misfortune can reach them. Nature is niggardly and griping, and chuses rather to receive than give: Grace is bountiful and kind: despises sordid gain and parsimony, is content with a little, distributes liberally and chear-

chearfully, and esteems *it more blessed to give than to receive.* Acts xx.

Nature inclines to creature-comforts, to carnal-delights, to worldly grandeur and vanity, to wandering and idle amusements: Grace fixes the heart upon God and goodness, concerns itself with the world as little as may be, hates fleshly lusts; checks and confines roving imaginations, and affects privacy and solitude. Nature is chiefly delighted with sensual pleasures: Grace feels no delight, but in God alone; and prefers that before all the pleasures that the objects of sense can afford. Nature does nothing without some view of interest, and for every kindness done you expects as good or better returns from you, either of things in kind, or at least of favour and applause for its pretended generosity, and sets a very high value upon all the obligations it lays: Grace neither desires nor expects a recompence in this world, but looks upon God as her reward; nor are the supplies and conveniencies of life of any farther consideration with her, than as a comfortable subsistence in this world may be serviceable, in promoting and facilitating the endeavours after another.

Nature values herself upon an extensive interest, a multitude of relations and friends, quality and noble blood; and therefore fawns upon, or favours men in power, courts and caresses the rich, applauds, and is partial to persons of the same condition, or opinion, or party: Grace is charitable and beneficent, even to enemies; is not lifted up by great or numerous friendships; and thinks the descent and family of a man a very contemptible thing, unless his virtue be as much more eminent than those of his inferiors, as he is superior in birth and rank. Grace favours the poor rather than the

rich, and is more concerned for the distressed condition of an innocent person, than of a great one; pays its respects to true intrinsic worth, not to the mere signs and trappings of it, which often only shew where it ought to be, not where it really is; it encourages the good in virtue, instead of flattering and soothing up the great in their wickedness and folly; and indefatigably labours, to conform those who profess themselves the children of God, to the likeness of their heavenly father's excellencies, by propagating all manner of piety and goodness.

Nature is easily provoked to discontent, by hard circumstances: Grace suffers want and poverty with meekness and much patience. Nature's ends and designs constantly center in her self: But Grace reflects on her original, and imagines, that all should return thither from whence at first it came; assumes nothing to itself; is not haughty, does not contend for praise or preference; is not positive and peremptory in her own opinions, but, in all searches after truth, submits her own reason and judgment, to the incomprehensible wisdom of God. Nature affects to be knowing, to understand and comprehend the profoundest and darkest mysteries, makes ostentation of all her new discoveries, and pretends to experiment and demonstration; labours to distinguish herself, to be thought more subtil than the rest of the world, and would be applauded and admired for all that is spoken or written, or done: Grace thinks it more prudent than to lay out time or thought upon new or unprofitable curiosities; but considers, that the ruin of mankind is owing to that busy desire of knowing what God has thought fit to conceal from them; that this inquisitive pretending temper is a sprout from that old root of bit-

bitterness; that established truths may be depended upon, but new and fanciful notions are generally no sooner entertained, than they are disproved and rejected; that men should therefore check that vain pleasure, which tickles their itching minds upon these occasions; no more pursue vain-glory, but labour rather to conceal, than to publish their advantages; and make usefulness, and virtue, and God's honour the only end of all their knowledge and studies. For, to him alone all thanks and praise must of right be due, who gives men all they have, of his own mere motion and free mercy.

And such is grace: A light that is superior to nature, and is that which should direct and preside over it; the peculiar gift of God; the distinguishing character of his chosen; the sure pledge of eternal happiness; for it raises a man's affections from earth to heaven, and changes him from flesh to Spirit. And, because these two principles are set to work by such different motives, proceed in such different methods, and pursue such differing ends; therefore, in proportion as nature is weakned and subdued, the larger measures of grace are bestowed; the more men's virtues are improved, and the glorious image of God renew'd in their hearts, by holy and heavenly dispositions.

R E F L E X I O N.

HE, who would know whether he is in a state of salvation, should examine whether he is in a state of Grace; for, the one is inseparably connected with the other; he who finds the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit working in him a love to God, a zeal for his honour, a veneration for the religion he has instituted, an affection for the yoke of Christ,

Christ, a resignation under every affliction to the Divine Will, patience under sufferings, a sincere penitence for past sins, and a holy resolution to renounce and forsake, and utterly detest and abhor every thing that shall stand in competition with the glory of God, the honour of his laws, and the true peace and welfare of his own soul. Thus stands it with him whom God is pleased to favour with his grace and the manifestations of his love. But he who is yet in a state of nature; who has not yet experienced the new birth, and the regenerating grace of God in his heart, is still under the power of sin, is governed by the violence of his own lusts and passions, and consequently is still under the wrath of God, exposed to the dreadful curses of the law, and, every moment, in danger of eternal damnation.

It behoves then every Christian, to watch the motions of his own heart, to observe the biases to which it inclines, to take particular notice to what kind of objects his affections chiefly tend; by which means he will be able to judge of the present state of his soul, how he stands in relation to God, and the concerns of another world; and by such reflections as these, he will be instructed to correct what he finds amiss in his own actions, will more clearly discern his duty to God, and what progress he daily makes in grace and holiness, and whether he is really in the way to heaven and eternal happiness; or going on in the broad way that leads to death and everlasting destruction.

CHAP. LX.

*The Corruption of Nature, and Efficacy
of Divine Grace.*

(Disciple.)

THOU hast indeed, my GOD, created me in thy own image, after thy likeness, and commanded me to be holy as thou thyself art holy. Genes. i. 14. 1 Pet. i. O grant me, I entreat thee, that favour and assistance, which thou in thy own Word hast taught me, is so important, so absolutely necessary to salvation; that I may subdue my own nature, whose inclinations are now so degenerate, so corrupt, that they have a strong and constant tendency to sin and death. For, I feel and lament a *law of sin in my body, warring continually against the law of my mind*, Rom. vii. drawing me to a compliance with the fleshly and sensual appetite, and disabling me from any resolute resistance against its fatal motions; except thy Divine Grace pour in fresh supplies, and help me to stand in the day of battle. Lord, I have need, not only of thy grace, but of very plentiful and powerful communications of it, to turn the bias of nature, which from my very infancy inclines me to evil. For this infection is derived from the first parent of mankind, and is the punishment of his offence inflicted upon his whole posterity; so that the human nature, which came pure and good out of thy creating Hand, is tainted and perverted, and all the motions, now remaining, draw the contrary way, and bend to sin and earth.

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The little Power left us to do good, is like a very small Spark, covered with a great Heap of Embers: Light of Reason clouded with a thick noisome Mist of Darknes and Error. And, though by this all the Distinctions of Good and Evil, of Truth and Falshood are not utterly lost, yet the Power of performing what our better Judgment approves, is gone; the Light of Truth is dim and feeble, and the Integrity of our Minds and Affections is blemished, and diverted from an impartial Attendance to it. Hence it comes to pass, that though sometimes I am delighted with thy Law in the inner Man; and fully convinced, that *Commandment is holy, just, and good*, condemning Wickedness, and warning me of the Rocks and Precipices, which, in steering my Course through the tempestuous Waves of this troublesome World, I must be careful to avoid; yet still with *the Flesh I serve the Law of Sin*, and find a stronger Inclination to follow Lust and Sense, than to be governed by Reason and Religion. Hence I so often feel the *Will to do well*; but *how to perform what I thus will, I find not*. Hence I often make and repeat good Resolutions with great Sincerity; but, for want of thy Assistance to counterpoise my Infirmities, I quickly fall from my Stedfastness, and am beaten off with the very Apprehension of Difficulty and Opposition. Hence I discern the Way I should walk in; but when I am inform'd of my Duty, and endeavour to raise my self above the World and its Temptations; a fatal innate Weight draws me down again, and checks my Soul in its intended Flights to Heaven and Thee.

How absolutely needful then, O my God, is thy grace to assist me in beginning, in carrying on, and in accomplishing every good work; since without it I am able to do nothing, and yet with it can

can do even all things? Yet, not I, Lord, but thou, who art in me, and strengthenest me. O Gift truly Divine! without which no merit of man, no endowments or qualifications of nature, are of any value or significance at all! Sciences and arts, riches and power, beauty and strength, wit and eloquence, what are they, Lord, or what to be accounted of, if not seconded, assisted, exalted, and perfected by Grace? These are accomplishments distributed promiscuously to good and bad; but grace is a gift peculiar to thy children and chosen ones, and such as renders the happy men that have it worthy of eternal life and happiness. Grace is a gift so peculiarly excellent, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the power of working miracles, nor the understanding of sublimest and most abstruse mysteries, nor faith, nor hope, nor any other virtue or privilege, can recommend us to God without it.

O blessed Efficacy of Grace, which makes the poor in spirit rich in virtue and good works; and renders that man who is so enriched, humble and poor in spirit! Come, heavenly Gift, descend from above, shed thyself into my soul, and fill every dark corner of my heart with light and comfort; rouse my courage, and shake off my sloth, moisten the dry soil, and command fruitfulness out of that barren ground. Vouchsafe me, Lord, this blessing; for this alone is sufficient for me, though thou for wise ends should'st think fit to deny or withdraw all, that nature can either bestow, or is most fond of acquiring. Give me but this defence, and no temptation shall confound me, no calamity terrify or make me afraid. For this alone is strength and courage, wisdom and protection; stronger than all my enemies, and wiser than all human counsels and

contrivances; the teacher of truth, the mistress of holy discipline, the light of the soul, the comfort under troubles, the resolver of doubts; the balm for my wounds, the dispeller of melancholy, the banisher of fear, the cherisher of devotion, the parent of contrition, the spring of holy tears, and of all those streams that cleanse and purge polluted consciences. Without this, what am I, but dry stubble, a rotten trunk, dead to good works, useless and unprofitable, and unfit for every thing but to be trodden under foot, and cast into the fire? Let therefore, O my God, I most humbly and heartily intreat thee, O let this grace and favour of thine *always prevent and follow, and make me continually to be given to all good works; that in all my actions begun, continued, and ended in thee, I may glorify thy holy Name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life.* Amen, Amen.

CHAP. LXI.

Self-denial recommended from Christ's Example.

(Christ.)

THE more, my son, thou forsakeest thyself, the nearer approaches thou makest toward me. As the desires and intemperate love of the things of this world, must be discarded, in order to enjoy peace in one's own breast; so even the love of one's own self must be laid aside, in order to a perfect union with God. Learn therefore to deny thy own will absolutely for mine, without contradiction or complaint. Follow me; *I am the way,*
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the truth, and the life. Without the way can be no walking; without the truth no knowledge; without the life no living. Keep then in this way, for it is the safest; believe in this truth, for it is infallible; hope for, and aspire to this life, for it is the only true, happy, and eternal life. Continue stedfast in my way, and thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, that thou mayest inherit everlasting life. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments,* Matth. xix. If thou wilt know the truth, believe my Words. If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast. If thou wilt save thy life hereafter, despise it here. If thou wilt be exalted in Heaven, abase thyself upon earth. If thou desire to reign with me, take up the cross with me. For none but they who bear my cross, are in the right way to happiness and true glory.

(Disciple.) This way, O Lord, is strait and rugged, such as the world declines, and cannot endure to think of. Therefore, I beseech thee, that thy grace would enable me to despise the world, and act in contradiction to the general opinion of men, in compliance with thy command and example. *For the servant is not greater than his lord, nor the disciple above his master.* John xv. Let thy servant then be guided in thy steps, for with thee is life and true holiness. And all I read or hear from weak and fallible man, gives me no refreshment, no true delight.

(Christ.) *If thou knowest these things, my son, happy art thou, if thou do them.* John xiii. For practice and not knowledge, shall inherit the blessing. *He that keepeth my Commandments, and doth them, he it is that loveth me, and I will love him in return, and manifest myself to him, and set him upon a throne with me, in my Father's kingdom.* John xiv.

(*Disciple.*) Lord, make me a partaker of this gracious promise. The cross, which I have received, from thy Hand, I will bear with constancy even unto death. The life of a sincere Christian is in truth one continued cross, but since this is the way that leads to paradise, it is by no means fit, that I should depart from it, or repent of my holy resolutions, and good beginnings.

Come then, my Christian Brethren, let us advance boldly. Take courage, for Christ is with us ; he does not only lead us on, but will enable us to follow him. For his sake we have taken up the cross, and for his sake only we must persevere in bearing it. Behold, the King and Captain of our salvation marches at our head, ready to fight our battles. Let us, like gallant soldiers, follow our Leader ; let us shake off our fears, and resolutely prepare to die in the field ; and not stain our honour, and lose our crown, by flinching from that service, and those hardships, which he hath made our duty and our glory.

R E F L E X I O N.

THE life of a Christian is in the condition of a city besieged on every side, by an army of formidable enemies ; he, like the governor in a siege, must take care to have every part guarded against the approaches of the enemy ; the gates of his heart must be close shut and barricaded against the vanities and delusions of the world ; his mind must be strongly fortified with every Christian Grace to resist the artillery with which he will be ply'd from the batteries which are erected against him on every quarter ; and sometimes he will find it necessary to make a sally upon the foe, to beat him out
of

of his trenches, and try his fortune in the open field. And if he expects to encounter the enemy with success, he must put on the whole armour of a Christian, faith, hope, patience, charity, and every other virtue; for, he will find all little enough to support him in his frequent engagements and conflicts with the combined forces of earth and hell. But that he may not be terrified with the apprehension of falling in the combat, or discouraged with the difficulties and hardships he may meet with, let him reflect that Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, trod the same path, suffered afflictions, both in body and mind, was assaulted by the devil, that grand adversary of mankind, and suffered the most base and ignominious treatment, that the most inveterate malice could invent or execute against him. And canst thou expect better usage than thy Lord and Master himself met with? Or canst thou indeed desire to be entirely exempted from sufferings and affliction, when the Blessed Jesus, thy dear Redeemer, underwent so much for thy sake? No; rather let the patience, the meekness, and resignation, which so eminently appeared in him under all his sufferings, be a pattern for thy imitation, encouragements for thy perseverance, and supports to thy soul under all the troubles, trials, and afflictions, which must necessarily be thy lot, till death shall set thee at liberty, and give thee a passage into the eternal mansions of rest and freedom.

CHAP. LXII.

Be not too much dejected under Temptations.

(*Christ.*)

Judge not, my Son, of thy favour and acceptance with God, by such false measures, as the warmth of thy devotion, and the delight which springs from the discharge of thy duty. For I am better pleased with humility and patience, and deep contrition of heart, in a disconsolate and afflicted state, than with an eager zeal and the most exalted acts of an easy and prosperous piety. And whence dost thou think, it comes to pass, that every scandal, which detracts from thy reputation, so sensibly affects thee? If it were even more to thy disparagement, yet could it not be worth thy concern. This is not the first injury of this kind, nor is it like to be the last, if thou shouldest live longer among men. And what is now new or strange, should not surprize thee. I know thy courage, and boasted bravery, while danger is at a distance. Thou canst discourse like a philosopher and a Christian, and give excellent advice to thy friends, when they labour under any distress; but when their case happens to be thy own, and some unexpected calamity befalls thee in thy own affairs; thy prudence and resolution forsake thee quite, and thou standest in no less need of the counsel and support, which thou wert wont so freely to impart to others heretofore.

Let this experiment remind thee of thy own frailty, which, by instances, 'tis evident, is
not

not proof against the slightest misfortunes. For even these instances are greatly for thy advantage, and bring thee to a right and perfect understanding of thy own condition. Grow wiser at least, at thy own expence; and as thy calmer reason shews they ought to be, so let thy behaviour evidence, that these tender resentments of temporal evils are banished out of thy mind. If thou canst not entertain adversity with absolute indifference, yet let it not hurry thee to despondency and wicked distrust; and, however the first onset may disturb thee, yet rally quickly and let it not long overpower thee. And tho' perhaps thou art not arrived to that perfection of *counting it all joy, when thou fallest into divers temptations*, Jam. i. yet nothing can excuse thee from undergoing them with meekness, and resignation, and patience. If thou hast not yet proceeded thus far, but some indecent reflections rise up in thy mind; yet let not this secret indignation break out into irreverent expressions, but *set a watch upon thy tongue, and keep the door of thy lips*, Psal. cxli. Resolve at least, that *thy mouth shall not offend*; Ps. xxxix. and though thy heart be not within thee, yet let not any passionate complaints burst out, which may cast imputations upon the honour of God, impeach the justice and goodness of providence, or give offence to thy weaker brethren. For, by thus fortifying and guarding well the outworks, thy inward commotions will in time be composed; thy sorrow will gradually turn into joy, and the favour and mercy of God be inclined to relieve and comfort thee, in recompence for thy reverence and submission to his good pleasure.

As I live, saith the Lord, I will help thee speedily, and comfort them who earnestly seek me, who put their

their trust in my salvation. Summon up thy Christian fortitude, and sink not under thy burthen, but prepare for greater trials. If thy former troubles have overwhelmed thy spirits, or been too much for thy temper and virtue ; let not the remembrance of thy former trials discourage thee. *The Lord knoweth whereof thou art made, he remembreth that thou art but dust :* Ps. ciii. A man, and not God ; flesh, and not angel, or unbodied spirit ; how canst thou then expect to remain in a constant and undisturbed state of goodness ? How should thy virtue be above the shocks and shakings of temptations, when even the angels kept not their first estate, and man in paradise so soon fell from innocence ? I am thy sole protection, who raise the souls that are dejected with sorrow, preserve those who confess and lament their own weakness, and glorify with myself the humble Christians, who are ashamed of their follies and miscarriages.

(*Disciple.*) Blessed be thy mercy, for the gracious words, which drop from thy mouth, soft as the gentle dew, and sweeter than honey and honey-comb. What would become of me, in the extremity of my distress and anguish of my soul, if thy promises and seasonable instructions did not refresh and comfort me ? But I submit entirely to thy will ; for I cannot think it any great matter, how long or boisterous my voyage is, so thou at last conduct me safe to that peaceful haven, where good men enjoy a perfect rest. Let my afflictions be never so great, so thou grant a happy issue, and turn my sufferings to good effect, I will not despond. But my condition in this life, whether adverse or prosperous, no prosperity will profit, no adversity hurt me, but in proportion

portion to the state in which I die. And if I go well out of the world, my continuance in it, however troublesome it may be, can never give me sufficient cause to repent or complain. Order my affairs then as thou pleasest; but always, O my God, remember me for good. Lead me in the right and straightest way to thy kingdom, dispose my every action towards the attainment of salvation, and *let me so pass through things temporal, that I finally lose not the things eternal.* Amen.

R E F L E X I O N.

PROSPERITY and affliction are two conditions of life that produce very different effects in most men. In the first we are apt to be too much elated, and to look with contempt on those who are in less happy circumstances; in the latter we often suffer ourselves to be too much depress'd, to give ourselves up to despair, to look with an envious eye on those who are in a more prosperous state, and even to charge God with injustice and inequality in the dispensations of his providence. When we see the wicked thrive and succeed in all that they set their hands unto, and at the same time behold the righteous groaning under affliction, cross'd with disappointments and losses, suffering in their reputations, and struggling with all manner of hardships and oppressions, we can scarce forbear charging God with unequal dealings with his children; not considering that God purposely suffers the tares and the wheat to grow together, till the harvest, or the great day of retribution, comes; then, and not till then, God will make a proper and a glorious distinction between those who have suffer'd manfully for his sake, and those who have preferr'd

present ease, and the pleasures and enjoyments of this world, to the hardships and difficulties of a religious life, and the expectations of a future happiness.

Let us not then be dejected or discouraged when we meet with sorrows and troubles of various kinds; but reflect that whatever we suffer God has a hand in, that if he corrects us, it is for our good; and that he deals with us no otherwise than he has dealt with all his children from the beginning of the world. Consider likewise, that this state of trouble and trial will be but of short continuance; that in a little time thy sorrows will be turned into the most extatic joys, and thy sufferings and troubles crowned with everlasting rewards, in a state of immortal bliss and happiness, where all tears shall be wiped away, and thy entertainment be the immediate smiles of a gracious and reconciled God and Father, the continual presence of thy dear Redeemer which thou hast so long and so earnestly wished to enjoy, the divine consolations and sacred influences of the Holy Spirit, which will no more be interrupted by the intervention of sin and vanity; and thy company shall be that of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; all which shall be thy portion through the endless ages of eternity.

CHAP. LXIII.

Search not into Things too high for thee, nor pretend to fathom the Depths of God and Providence.

(*Christ.*)

BEware, my son, that thou do not dispute, or determine any thing concerning abstruse and difficult points; nor too curiously search into those myste-

mysterious dispensations, which God hath purposefully concealed from thee. Concern not thyself about the wonderful distributions of Grace or Providence; why one man is forsaken and in disfavour with God, another so surprizingly favoured by him; this person exercised with afflictions and sorrows, or that so kindly dealt with, so unaccountably exalted. These are things out of thy sphere: And all the parts and penetration, the acutest wit, and acquired accomplishments of man, are much too short and feeble, to fathom the reasons of the divine counsels. If therefore such a humour of curiosity returns upon thee, look upon it as the suggestion of the devil, by which he labours to disquiet and unsettle thee. If men, impertinently busy, require of thee a solution of such difficulties, content thyself with that general answer of the prophet: *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments*; Jer. xii. 1. *The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; his righteousness standeth like the strong mountain, fix'd and immoveable, eminent and conspicuous; and his judgments are like the great deep*: Ps. xxxvi. 7. A vast and dark abyss, such as we cannot see to the bottom of, or fathom with the short line of a finite understanding.

My methods and dealings should be the subjects of admiration and reverence, not to be sawcily criticized upon, by my own creatures. For, no finite creature can have a capacity proportioned to them; and what is above human comprehension, should not be the subjects of human enquiry.

As little ought they to enquire and dispute concerning the merits or the preference of good men; which of the saints excels in virtue, or is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. For these are questions in which we are no ways concerned, but are such as

engender strife and debate, and turn to no good account. They cherish arrogance and pride, envy and faction, while men divide into parties, and each strives for the preeminence of him, whose order and patronage he is devoted to, or whom his own vain imagination inclines him most to honour. The effect of this is very evident, and the mischiefs that spring from such an impertinent zeal, exceeding numerous and lamentable; the controversy, neither possible to be decided, nor worth the trouble of deciding, if it could. And, if those saints have any knowledge of what passes here below, this indiscreet and partial zeal cannot but be highly disagreeable to them. For I am not a God of contention and faction, but of order and peace, and love. And these are the genuine products of true modesty and humility, such as esteems others better than itself; but is inconsistent with that bold assuming temper, which is restless and dissatisfied, if any other be preferred before it. It may be, affection and honest zeal may dispose some men to be more liberal in their respect to this or that side of the differing parties; but, do not such men reflect, that such affection is not the effect of grace or religion, but merely of human infirmity? These are such prepossessions as I can never be capable of; for all the saints are equally mine. My hand made them men, my assisting grace made them saints; I enriched them with virtues, and have and shall crown them all with glory. I know what each has done, what occasions they had, what improvements they made. I foreknew them before time was; they chose not me, but I them; and singled them out from the rest of mankind. I drew them with the cords of love and mercy, conducted them through great variety of trials and afflictions; sustain'd them
with

with uncommon comforts and recruits, enabled them to persevere, and rewarded the constancy my self had given. I know the first and last; and my fatherly, my inexpressible affection extends to them all. For all are instruments in promoting my praise and glory, so many monuments and eternal trophies of my goodness; freely advanced to what they are, by my bounty and favour, without any right or antecedent merit of their own. He therefore, who despises the least of these, shews a disrespect to the greatest; for this contempt at last reflects on me, the author of their virtues and their happiness; and therefore in me alone should all the honour centre, which is pretended to be paid to them. Their interests and properties, are no longer separate; for charity hath made them one, and join'd them into the same mystical body, whose honours, advantages, inclinations, and joys, are inseparably the same. Nay, which is the utmost perfection of charity, they all unite in loving me more than themselves, or any merits or respects of their own; for, being in that happy state exalted above themselves, they are entirely taken up with the love and honour of God. This is their happiness and utmost end. Nothing can divert them to meaner prospects, no mixture of self intervenes to damp the pure flames of his everlasting love.

Away then with these vain curiosities, these eager disputes, concerning the state and condition of the blessed; which betray a prevalence of carnal and sensual appetites, such as have no notions higher than particular gains and separate interests. Nature and partiality incline men of such dispositions, to act, and desire, and love, and hate, upon private and personal considerations; and then they fondly transfer the same idea's and the same behaviour,

viour, from earthly to heavenly objects. Alas! The difference is the widest that can be imagin'd, and nothing in nature is so distant, as the silly conceits of such novices in matters relating to a future state from those juster apprehensions, which minds, enlightned from above, entertain upon these occasions. Be not too curious then, my son, in matters which transcend thy capacity; but rather let it be thy care and constant thought, how thou may'st be found, tho' it be but the least, in the kingdom of heaven. For, was it possible for thee to understand all mysteries and all knowledge; could'st thou distinctly view the several orders and places of each angel and spirit above; yet what would this avail, farther than as it excited in thee less concern for thy own, and greater zeal for my honour? The man, who seriously reflects upon the multitude of his own sins, and the imperfections and worthlessness of his own virtues, how few, how poor, how far short they are of the perfection of those bright examples.

This is a controversy, which they themselves never concern themselves about. For they ascribe nothing to any deserts of their own, but acknowledge the whole of what they have and are, to be the sole effect of my infinite beneficence and love. And their happiness and honour is compleat, by the joy they take in the fruition of God and his glory. The more exalted any of these are, the more modest they are; the more dear, and the more like to me. Thus much is intimated by that vision, where they are said to *cast their crowns at the feet of God, and falling down upon their faces before the throne, and before the Lamb, to worship him that liveth for ever and ever.* Rev. x.

Is it not highly absurd, to see men zealously contending who is greatest in the kingdom of God, who

who in the mean while are not solicitous to know, what much more nearly concerns them, namely, whether they shall have any place at all there themselves? And yet to be least there is to be great, for even the least are sons and heirs of God. *A little one shall become a thousand; and the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner of an hundred years old shall be accursed, Isa. lx. 22. and lxxv. 20.* When the disciples inquired who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, this was the answer made to that demand: *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Matth. xviii.* Woe to them who think it beneath them to imitate the humility and meekness of little children; for strait and low is the gate of heaven, such as the towings of ambition, and swellings of bloated vanity can never stoop to, or enter at. Woe to the rich, who have their portion in this world, for when the poor shall be admitted into paradise, they shall stand weeping and wailing without. But rejoice, ye meek, and humble, and poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; if ye sincerely embrace and obey the truth, and be rich in patience and good dispositions.

REFLEXION.

WHOEVER seriously considers the weakness of his own natural capacity, and how liable he is to error and delusion, even in things that pertain to this life only, how unable he is to resolve even many of the common operations and appearances of nature, must surely be convinced that the things of an invisible world are far more impenetrable, and are

are removed to a much greater distance from the reach of his understanding, as he has no adequate ideas, to judge of them by. Whoever believes there is a God, and I would willingly hope there are none that do not, must believe he is a being of infinite perfection, incomprehensible as he is infinite, eternal in duration, inscrutable in his purposes, and all his ways unfathomable by the shallow line of human understanding. Who then dares be so presumptuous as to call God to an account for any of his proceedings; or to say this step of his providence is wrong; that dispensation is unequal or unjust; such an affliction is undeserved? *Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* Can a finite capacity circumscribe the boundless Ocean of Infinity? Pretend not then to understand the mysterious ways of God; they are all above thy reach; his designs and views are quite out of thy knowledge. All that is required of thee is, to know thy duty as it is plainly laid down in his holy Word, to search the Scriptures, and to attain such a measure of instruction in the divine mysteries, as to make thee wiser and better, and enable thee more exactly to perform thy duty both towards God and man.

CHAP. LXIV.

God is all the Hope and Confidence of a good Man.

(Disciple.)

IN whom, O LORD, is my hope, while here upon earth? or what, of all sublunary things, can minister peace and comfort to my soul? Truly
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my hope is even in thee, and my joy and trust in thy mercy alone. When were my affairs in a bad condition with thee? Or what can prevent my being the most miserable of all men without thee? Poverty for thy sake is infinitely preferable to all the riches and grandeur in the world, when made in exchange for thy favour; and earth and banishment with that favour more blissful than heaven without the fruition of thee; for, heaven becomes heaven only by thy blessed presence; and where that does not reside, all is death, and the grave, and hell. Thou art my desire, and my portion, and therefore to thee my sighs and groans, and cries, and prayers, continually ascend. I have no other support or refuge, that can send me seasonable and suitable relief in my dangers and necessities; but thou alone art my hope and trust, my effectual comforter, and faithful friend.

Others pursue their own private ends and advantages, but thou desirest my improvement and happiness, and orderest all things for my good. Even my temptations and afflictions are intended for my service. These are the methods, by which the fidelity of thy children is brought to the test; and even the harsher dispensations of providence ought as much to engage my affections, and excite my gratitude and praise, as the brightest comforts, and most desirable prosperity. In thee therefore, O my God, I rest my soul; thou art my sanctuary, where I deposit the burthen of all my griefs and troubles. For no where besides can they and I be safe, since all things else are feeble and uncertain, neither able, nor always disposed, to comfort and protect me. Friends cannot serve me as they would; great men will not, or cannot help; the wise, without thee, mistake their measures; books are but an insignifi-

cant amusement, and yield no solid satisfaction; wealth cannot purchase ease and peace of mind; fortresses and coverts cannot hide me from calamity, unless thou assist those friends, and strengthen those great men, and direct those counsellors, and instruct me by those books, and teach me the true use of wealth, and guard that strong retreat. For peace and happiness are intirely in thee. Thou art the end, the sum, and source of all good; the perfection of life, the depth of wisdom and knowledge: And hope in thee is the surest, the most sensible support thy servants can have, under the miseries of this mortal life.

To thee therefore lift I up my eyes, O Father of mercies, and lover of men. Comfort my soul in trouble, and purify it with thy grace, that I may be a clean and holy mansion, such as thy glorious Majesty does not disdain to dwell in. Let no impurity be left in this temple; but purge it thoroughly from every thing, which may offend those eyes, that cannot behold iniquity or uncleanness. Look upon me in thy great goodness, and, after the multitude of thy mercies, hear the prayer of thy poor servant, now wandering in the vale of the shadow of death. O do thou keep and protect the soul of thy servant amidst the innumerable dangers of his frail and transitory life, and by the assistance of thy grace, do thou guide me in the way of peace to everlasting happiness in the heavenly Canaan. Amen.

The End of the Third Book.

OF THE
 IMITATION
 OF
 Jesus Christ.

The Fourth Book.

CHAP. I.

An Exhortation to the Holy Communion.

(CHRIST.)

COME unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

The Bread which I shall give, is my Flesh for the Life of the world.

Take, eat, this is my Body that is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me.

He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

The words which I speak unto you are Spirit and Life.

CHAP. II.

Receive CHRIST with Reverence.

(Disciple.)

THe foregoing exhortation, I acknowledge, my most gracious Lord, thou everlasting truth, proceeded from thee, though not spoken all at one time, nor written in one place, nor by one of thy servants only. And since I am satisfied that these words were spoken or dictated by thyself alone, it is my duty to receive them thankfully, and to improve them in the best manner I am able. They are undoubtedly thine, because thou hast spoken them; and they are mine too, since thou hast spoken them for my use, and that I may improve them to my own salvation. I receive them willingly from thy mouth, that they may make the deeper impression on my heart. These words of thine are full of love and sweetness, and give me great encouragement; but mine offences terrify me, and my impure conscience frightens me from receiving such great mysteries. The affectionate tenderness of thy words encourages me; but the heavy, the insupportable burthen of my sins weigh me down.

Thou hast commanded me to come with confidence unto thee, if I expect to share in this banquet; to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain everlasting life and glory.

These, sweet *JESUS*, are thy gracious words, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,* and I will refresh, *I will give you rest.* O how delightful and friendly are such words as these in the ears,

ears of sinners ! What condescension in thee, my Lord God, that thou shouldest invite the poor and needy, to partake of thy holy body ! But who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach so near unto thee ? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; and yet, O Lord, thou sayest, *Come ye all unto me.*

What means this so gracious condescension, this so friendly invitation ? But how shall I dare to come, that know no good in my self that can give me any title to thy favour ? With what face can I ask thee to take up thy abode with me, who have so offended thee, so often slighted thy gracious invitations ? The angels and archangels revere and adore thee ? the saints in heaven and righteous men on earth fear thee ; and yet thou sayest to all sinners in general, *Come unto me.* And, indeed, O Lord, unless thou had'st said it, who could have beleived it to be true ? And unless thou hadst commanded it, who would be so presumptuous as to dare to come unto thee ? I have read in thy Word, that *Noah*, to whom thou gavest the character of just man, laboured an hundred years in making the ark, that he might be saved with a few ; and shall I, who am too much under the power of sin, and clothed with corruption, fondly imagine myself sufficiently prepared in so short a space as an hour or two, to receive with reverence this holy Institution ? *Moses*, thy eminent servant, whom thou didst honour with thy peculiar friendship and intimacy, made an ark of incorruptible wood, and covered it with pure gold, to deposit therein the tables of the Law ; how shall then a poor corruptible creature, presume so highly to receive the Maker of the Law, and the giver of Life ? *Solomon*, who was renowned for the excellence of his wisdom,

wisdom, bestowed seven years in building a magnificent temple for thy worship and the praise of thy Name. For eight days successively he celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof; he offer'd a thousand peace-offerings; and with all imaginable solemnity set the ark in the place prepar'd for it, with the sound of trumpets and the manifestations of joy and gladness.

If *Solomon* thought he could not be at too much expence, or his preparations too solemn, for the reception and residence of the God of heaven; how can I, poor miserable wretch, imagine, that I can give thee a proper entertainment, who can scarce confine my thoughts one half hour to thy worship? And indeed, I wish I could spend even near so short a space as that, in pure and uninterrupted devotion.

O my most gracious God, how much did thy saints of old endeavour to please thee! But alas! how little is that which I do! How small, how short are my preparations to meet and receive thee in thy holy Institution? It is but rarely I can collect thy thoughts together, very rarely that I am free from distraction. And yet I am very well assured that no unbecoming thought ought to appear in the presence of the Majesty of heaven and earth; nor should any creature find a place in my affections; no not an angel, in preference to thee the Lord of angels.

And yet, O Lord, there is a vast difference between the ark of the covenant, with its sacred relicts, and thy pure immaculate body with all its ineffable virtues and graces; between those legal sacrifices, which were but types and figures of better things to come, and the true and real sacrifice of thy body, which is the full completion of all antient sacri-

sacrifices. Why therefore is not my zeal more inflamed at thy awful and venerable presence? Wherefore do not I exert my endeavours more in preparing myself to receive thy holy things; since those holy antient patriarchs, prophets, kings, princes, nay, the whole people, gave such eminent instances of the most affectionate devotion to thy service? King *David*, who was called *a man after thy own heart*, and his piety, no doubt, was raised to a very high pitch, when he danced before the ark with all his might, and celebrated thy praises for the benefits and blessings which thou hadst bestowed upon the whole nation of *Israel* in times past. He made various kinds of musical instruments; he composed psalms, and appointed them to be sung with a joyful heart. He also himself frequently sung to the harp, being divinely inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost. He instructed the people of *Israel*, both by his own example, and the rules and directions he gave, to praise God with their whole heart, and with united voices to offer up their daily praises and thanksgivings to him. If then under the dark dispensation of the Law there was such a fervent devotion shewn; and the divine praise was celebrated in so exalted a manner before the ark of the testimony; with what reverential fear and holy zeal does it become me, and all such as profess the Name of Christ, to approach thy table, and to partake of the profound mysteries of the holy eucharist!

O thou Almighty God, the invisible Creator of this visible world, how wonderfully doest thou deal with us! How sweetly and graciously doest thou dispose of all things for the good and welfare of thy children, to whom thou offerest thyself to be received in the Sacrament! This wonderful con-

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descension in thee surpasses all human understanding, strongly draws the heart of the devout, and inflames their affections.

Such as are my true and faithful servants, who are sincerely disposed to correct the errors of their lives, receive from this Sacrament great assistance in their pious endeavours, improve in grace, raise their devotion, and increase in the love of holiness.

O how wonderful and hidden is the virtue of this Sacrament! So mysterious is it that none but sincere Christians can be acquainted with it! Such is it, that the unbelievers, the carnal-minded, such as are under the power and dominion of sin, and slaves to their lusts, can have no taste of, no relish for, it is such as they can have no experience of, no benefit from.

In this Sacrament are communicated the graces of the Holy Spirit; and the strength, which was lost in the depravity of nature, is restored to the soul, and the beauty that was disfigured by sin, returns again with additional lustre. So great is the Grace which the believer frequently receives on these occasions, that out of the fulness of devotion with which he is inspired, not only the soul, but even the weak body also, experiences a wonderful increase of strength.

Our coldness and indifference are much to be pitied and lamented, that we are so backward to be drawn to embrace Christ with greater affection; for in him alone are our hopes, our merits, and dependence for salvation and eternal happiness placed. For he alone is our sanctification and redemption; he is our comfort and consolation while we are travelling this vale of tears, and the eternal enjoyment of his saints glory. How greatly therefore

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ST LUKE 10 Verse 31.32.

H Roberts Sculp

*The Unkindness of the Priest to the Man whom
he found robb'd and abus'd on the Road*

is it to be lamented, that there should be so many who call themselves Christians, and so little consider the value of that salutary mystery, which rejoices even heaven itself, and is a preservative to the whole world. O the blindness of our eyes! the hardness of our hearts! that we do not more seriously weigh and consider the worth of so unspeakable a gift, but rather, from the frequent use of it, regard it as a trifle, as nothing!

If the celebration of this most holy Sacrament had been confined to one place only, and limited to be administered by only one priest in the world; with what eagerness and earnestness would men flock to that place, and to the priest, that they might participate of these divine mysteries? But now, there are many priests, and the Passion of Christ is exhibited in this Sacrament in many places, in order that the Grace and Love of God to man may be every-where more known, and this sacred Communion, by this means, spread through the whole world.

All thanks and praise be given unto thee, our dear Redeemer, the everlasting shepherd of thy flock, who art pleased thus to refresh us with thy precious Body and Blood, and to invite us to partake of these mysteries, with those gracious words, which proceeded out of thy own mouth, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

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CHAP.

CHAP. III.

*The Goodness and Love of God to Man, manifested
in this Sacrament.*

(*Disciple.*)

IN confidence of thy great goodness and tender mercy, I come unto thee, O Lord, as a sick man to the most sovereign Physician; hungry I come to thee who art the Bread of Life; thirsty to thee who art the Fountain of living Waters; needy to the King of Heaven; a servant unto my Lord and Master; a poor unworthy creature to my Creator; mourning and disconsolate to thee, who alone canst give me comfort. But whence is it, O Lord, that thou vouchsafest me thy gracious presence? Which way can I account for this astonishing instance of thy goodness, that thou shouldest give thyself unto me? It is the highest presumption in a sinner to offer to intrude into thy presence: How infinite then is thy condescension in vouchsafing to come to a sinner? Thou knowest thy servant, and seest that he hath no good thing in him, no merit that may entitle him to receive such a favour at thy Hands. I humbly confess therefore my own unworthiness; I acknowledge thy goodness; I praise thy mercy; I give thee my most humble and hearty thanks for this unexpected instance of thy love.

This thou doest for thy own sake; for I am very well assured, that I have no merits whereon to found any claim to such a favour; and therefore thy only motive for doing this, was, to make thy
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goodness better known unto me; thy love more abundantly manifested; and thy gracious condescension more eminently display'd. Since therefore these are the effects of thy good pleasure, as well as thy express command, I accept of thy favour with pleasure and thankfulness; and grant, my most dear Lord, that my sins may be no hindrance to my receiving it with due reverence and gratitude.

O most sweet and benevolent *Jesus*, what thanks, adoration, and reverence, together with continual acts of praise, are due unto thee, for this permission to me to hold communion with thee in this holy ordinance, and to partake of thy Body and Blood, whose preciousness it is not in the power of words sufficiently to express! But now that I am going into the presence of my Lord, how shall I order my thoughts for this communion with him, whom with all my powers and faculties I am not able duly to honour, and yet most ardently desire to receive him with all the devotion that the solemnity of the occasion requires? Since therefore I cannot give him that honourable reception which the Majesty and Holiness of his presence demands, or such as I sincerely desire to give him, what can I do better, what can turn more to my advantage, than to cast myself wholly at thy feet, in a deep and humble sense of my own unworthiness?

The more I consider, the more am I lost in wonder and astonishment! Behold, thou art the Holy of Holies, and I the vilest of sinners! Thou, tho' exalted above all human comprehension, inclinest thyself unto me, who am not worthy to look up unto the place where thine honour dwels! Thou didst first offer to come unto me; hast declared thy good pleasure to abide with me; and invitest me to thy Banquet. Thou tenderest to me the Food

of heaven, the Bread of angels to eat, which indeed is no other than thyself, the living Bread, that came down from heaven, and gives life unto the world.

From whence, O Lord, does this infinite love proceed? What demonstrations are here of thy gracious condescension! What thanks, what praises are due unto thee for these benefits! How good and profitable, how well-designed was thy counsel, when thou didst institute this ordinance! How sweet and pleasant the feast, when thou gavest thyself to be our food!

How wonderful, O Lord, are thy operations! how mighty thy power! how unspeakable is thy truth? By the power of thy Word were all things created; thou commandedst that this Sacrament should be instituted, and it was accordingly done. Truly admirable is this mystery, that thou, my Lord God, who art true God and man, shouldest be pleased to exhibit thyself unto us under the elements of bread and wine! That thou, who art the Lord of all things, and standest in no need of any, shouldest be pleased to take up thy dwelling with us by means of this thy Sacrament. Do thou mercifully preserve my soul and body undefiled, that with a chearful and pure conscience I may celebrate these mysteries, and receive them to the comfort and everlasting health of my soul; even these mysteries which thou hast instituted and ordained for thy honour, and a perpetual memorial of thy Death and Passion.

Rejoice, O my soul, and pay thy thanks unto God, for so noble, so excellent a gift, so singular a comfort to support me in this vale of tears: For, as often as thou joinest in the celebration of this mystery, and therein partakest of the Body and
Blood

Blood of Christ; so often do'st thou renew the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the Merits of Christ. For the love of Christ cannot, will never be diminished, and the greatness of his propitiation will never be exhausted. Therefore thou shouldest never come to this Sacrament without preparing thyself thereunto by a renewal of thy baptismal covenant, and by weighing with attentive consideration this great mystery of thy salvation. So great should thy awe, thy joy, thy reverence, so ardent thy desires when thou comest to this solemn festival, to partake of these holy mysteries; as if the same day Christ was descending into the Virgin's womb, with an intent to become man; or, was then hanging on the cross, suffering, groaning, bleeding, and dying, for the salvation of mankind.

CHAP. IV.

*The Advantages of coming frequently to
this Sacrament.*

(*Disciple.*)

BEhold me, O Lord, embolden'd by thy Word, and encourag'd by thy invitation, now presenting myself before thee, humbly expecting the comfort and consolation, the sweet delights and refreshing joys, which thou hast provided for thy faithful children in this holy Banquet, which thou, my God, has prepared for the entertainment of thy poor people. In thee, O Lord, I shall find
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all that I can or ought to desire. Thou art my salvation, my redemption, my hope, my strength, my honour, and my glory. This day therefore, do thou rejoice the disconsolate heart of thy poor servant; for unto thee, Lord Jesus, do I now lift up my soul. I most earnestly desire now to receive thee with awful reverence, and pure devotion. I long to bring thee into my house, and with *Zaccheus* of old to be blessed, and accounted by thee among the true spiritual sons of *Abraham*. My soul desires to be fed and strengthened by thy body, and my heart to be entirely join'd, inseparably united to thee.

Give me but thyself, and if thou withholdest all things besides, I am satisfied. For all things else are miserable comforters, and rather aggravate than lessen my wretchedness. Without thy consolations I am not able to subsist: And therefore I feel an absolute necessity of coming to thee for frequent and fresh supplies of grace and strength. My spirits languish and sink; and, if I fast too long, I perish for want of seasonable recruits from this heavenly sustenance. Thy bowels heretofore yearned over the multitudes, who came from far to hear thy saving doctrine, and to be healed of their bodily distempers. Thou would'st not send them away empty, but wer't pleased to feed them by a miracle, lest they should faint by the way. *Matt. xv.* Extend the same compassion towards me, thy poor servant, and let this Sacrament support my fainting soul, in this wilderness, barren and remote from any true comfort. For, thou art the sweet, the reviving food of sinking and weary spirits; and they, who worthily partake of this repast, are nourished unto life eternal. I am sadly sensible of my infirmities, and frequent

relapses into sin, and how urgent my occasions are for these repeated refreshments. I quickly abate of my warmest resolutions; my purposes of goodness sicken and languish apace; and these decays must end in spiritual death, did not my prayers, my self-examinations, my confessions and holy sorrows, preparatory to this holy feast, often return: Did not this divine sustenance cleanse and renew my affections; confirm my purposes of doing well, excite and inflame my zeal and love for God and good works. Obstinate fasting would not more certainly quench all my vital heat, and destroy my body; than too long abstinence from this spiritual food will waste and quite extinguish the vigorous piety of my soul, and all its resolutions of living well.

I am sensible of, and heartily bewail, a fatal tendency to evil; and my experience, from my very infancy, shews me, how strongly I incline to sin, and fall from bad to worse, except a remedy from above recover me from this indisposition, and succour and support me from plunging into hell. This holy Sacrament is that remedy. It calls back my wandring steps, prevents my falling by relapse or neglect, and strengthens me in grace and goodness. And if, even in my studied and most laboured devotions, I am so often cold, so lukewarm at the best; how frozen should I be, how insensible and dead, were these helps laid aside, and no such application used to warm and quicken me? Though therefore my life be not so perfect as I could desire; and though I am always in a fit disposition to communicate; yet it shall be my care, at solemn and proper seasons, not to lose the benefit of these holy mysteries, or ever to refuse my own happiness. For
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this the sovereign balm of wounded consciences; the great preservative of decaying souls, the cheering comfort of the faithful, and the true consolation of such as mourn their present state of banishment, and groan earnestly for a release from the afflictions and infirmities of those mortal bodies, to which thy providence hath, for a time, confined them. And the oftner they thus remember their God, the greater is that affliction, and humble devotion, with which they court and embrace their beloved Spouse and Lord.

But oh! how amazing is thy love? And what is man whom thou condescendest to visit, when the great God, the Creator of the world, and Father of the spirits of all flesh, does not disdain to descend into a poor soul, and fill the hungry wretch with all his fatness? Happy is that man, who is thus honoured, and unspeakable the joy, with which his heart overflows! How glorious a Master, how agreeable a guest, how pleasant a companion, how faithful a friend, how beautiful, how honourable, how charming a husband, does such a pious soul entertain and embrace? Let heaven and earth, and all their boasted excellencies, keep silence before him; for if I have my Jesus, I have all. For I have him, from whom all other things derive their excellence; and their borrowed precarious perfections can yield no joy, can give no happiness, without this great original. They in themselves are nothing, they are no more than what he made them; and he alone is more, incomparably more and better, than all that ever was, or could be made.

CHAP. V.

The Pleasures of Devout Communion.

(Disciple.)

Prevent me, I most humbly beseech thee, my LORD and my GOD, with the blessings and grace of thy Holy Spirit; that thy servant may taste thy sweetness, and approach this precious feast, with such reverence, and zeal, and fervent devotion, as thou wilt be pleased to accept. O visit me with thy salvation, and rouse me from spiritual sloth and slumber; that I may now vigorously apply myself, to draw and drink the living water, contain'd in this fountain which is open for sin and for uncleanness. Enlighten the eyes of my mind, that I may see the wondrous things which are exhibited in this thy institution; and strengthen my faith, that I may firmly and without scruple believe and expect those operations, which my reason is not able to account for. And why, indeed, should I make any difficulty to believe, what I cannot comprehend or trace the dark footsteps of; when I consider, that it is not the act of finite feeble man, but the work of an Almighty God; not an invention or project of human reason, but the institution and promise of him, who worketh all things according to the wise and wonderful counsel of his own unbounded will? To fathom these depths to the bottom were an attempt impracticable, even to the refined understanding of an angel. Well then may poor short-sighted man turn giddy at the sight of this abyss, and confess the well too deep, and the line too short. Such and no better

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is the condition of the most exalted saints; how then can I, the feeblest even of men, vile sinful dust and ashes, hope to discover, by my most industrious search the inscrutable depths of these heavenly mysteries?

Instead therefore of curious reasoning and unprofitable disputes, I will approach with singleness of heart, with firm and holy hope, with an undoubting faith and profound reverence. Whatever the vanity of worldly wisdom may suggest to the contrary, I will not in the least question, but thou art present in the Sacrament, though I cannot satisfy every captious enquirer into the particular manner of that presence. Thy human and divine nature are inseparable; thus much I know, and no more but this; that thou art so present as God, as not to contradict thy being man. 'Tis upon this account, that thou art pleased to command my receiving thee, and hast engaged to make me one with thyself, by the strictest union of a holy love. Shed therefore, I beseech thee, thy special grace into my heart, that I may dissolve in this holy fire, and become entirely thine. Purge off my dross, and let me no longer endure the allay of any baser mixtures. For this Sacrament is the purest, the noblest refiner of souls, the health of the whole man, the restorative of spiritual decays, the cure of vice, the curb of passions, the antidote against troubles and temptations; the conveyer of greater grace, the increase of imperfect virtue; the anchor of hope, the support of our faith, and the mighty incentive of our charity.

Who is able to express the manifold, the astonishing benefits, which thou frequently bestowest on thy beloved and religious servants, by communicating in this blessed Supper? Even thou, my God,
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the Cherisher of my soul, the Repairer of my breaches that have been made by infirmity and sin, and the Restorer of my inward comfort and peace. By this thou sustaineſt thy children under their sorrow and affliction, and enableſt them to walk upon the waves of a troublesome world. By this thou cheereſt their melancholy and diſtruſt, and raiſeſt up their ſinking ſpirits with aſſurance. By this thou reneweſt their nature, and purifieſt their affections; that they who came at firſt to this table, with great reluctance and heavineſs, feel a new warmth within, and by degrees are brought to frequent it with unſpeakable reliſh and delight. Theſe happy and glorious effects thou produceſt, by ſuch uncommon, unlikely means, that men may find experimentally their own infirmities; how little they are able to do of themſelves, and how much, when ſtrengthened by thee. That they are cold, inſenſible, ſtupid and dead to all religious duties, proceeds from their own diſpoſition; that they are zealous in good works, chearful in thy ſervice, devout in thy worſhip, is purely thy gift. And ſure none can come to this ſolemn feſtival with tolerable attention, but he muſt return with ſome improvement. For who can lie at the fountain-head, and not receive ſome tincture from the ſweetneſs of the ſpring? Who can ſtand cloſe to the fire, and feel no heat? But thou art a fountain ever full, always overflowing. Thou art the fire, whoſe flames are conſtantly expanding themſelves, to kindle holy affections in all thoſe who are careful to approach, and put themſelves within the reach of their influence.

Perhaps I am not worthy to drink at the head of this ſpring, or to take my fill of its reſreſhing ſtreams; but yet, at leaſt, I will apply my mouth

to some of its distant pipes, and spreading rills, to catch a few of drops, as they slide by, that I be not utterly barren, nor die with drought and thirst. I may not be able to approach so near this flame, that it should refine and brighten me to a degree equal with the purity of a cherubim and seraphim; but yet I will not despair of being so far cherished and warmed by it, that my zeal may be exalted according to the brightness of human virtues: And my enlivened heart shall feel some glowings, if it do not break out into a heavenly flame. Defects and infirmities, I know, I cannot be exempted from: But what is wanting, I entreat my merciful Jesus would supply. His kindness will undoubtedly make all equitable allowances, and his wisdom knows where they are proper to be made. They may be forgiven and made up; and I, unworthy as I am, may be accepted. But that unworthiness must not be made a pretence for detaining me from this Sacrament. For sure the most unworthy are comprehended, and they who see, and lament, that they are such, can least of all be excluded; when he pronounces that general invitation, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

The oftener I descend into my self, the more I am convinced, that this description exactly suits my state. I fulfil the primitive sentence pronounced upon fallen man, and labour in the sweat of my face. The sorrows of my heart perplex and distract me, the burthen of my sins presses me down, the multitude of my temptations are a continual torment and vexation, the variety and exorbitance of my corrupt affections entangle, confound, and overpower my reason. And in the midst of these calamities and dangers, I have no succour, no defence,

no supporter or deliverer, but only thee, my God, and therefore into thy hands, my merciful Maker and Saviour, I commit my self, and all my affairs; and beg, that thou wouldest keep that which I have thus entrusted to thy care, safe unto life eternal. O take me therefore into thy custody; and, as thou hast ordained thy Body and Blood to be the food of immortality; so grant, I beseech thee, that I may have its proper efficacy upon my soul in particular, to the glory of thy Name, and the honour of so blessed an institution. And that no neglect or unfruitfulness of mine may interrupt or obstruct its kindly and powerful operations; Grant, I entreat thee, my God and Saviour, that I may never be guilty of such disrespect, as wilfully to turn my back upon thy table; but may earnestly long for, heartily rejoice in, and diligently comply with, every opportunity of receiving this mighty blessing; and may so frequent, and so improve under this thy gracious dispensation; that I may constantly return, with greater care and zeal, more settled resolutions, more irreconcilable hatred against sin, and more fervent love for God and goodness, than before. So indeed shall I approach nearer to thee, and each Sacrament prove a fresh advance toward heaven. So shall my soul be filled with the treasures of thy mercy, the delights of thy secret ones, and the ravishing foretastes of that bliss, which shall be always growing, till it be consummated and lost in that eternal feast above, the Marriage-supper of the Lamb in thy Kingdom. *Amen.*

CHAP. VI.

*The Dignity of the Sacrament, and ministerial Function.**(Christ.)*

MY Son, if thou seest the table richly furnished, and art desirous to feast upon these celestial dainties, let that desire be duly tempered with reverence and holy fear. For, be assured, that if thou hadst the purity of an angel, or the mortified piety of *John* the Baptist, yet even then thou could'st not deserve so divine a blessing, but ought'st to acknowledge it a mighty favour and condescension, that thou art admitted to receive, and taste, or even to touch this blessed Sacrament. That man should consecrate those elements, and by pronouncing a set form of words introduce a new efficacy, and give them a mystical power, which it is not in the power of nature to provide them with; that the persons present should eat the bread of angels, and be filled with heavenly food, by virtue of such consecration; these are not the effects of any extraordinary merit, in them who sanctify, or in those who receive those creatures of bread and wine, but the pure and sole effect of divine mercy and grace. The greatness of the mystery does indeed magnify the priestly office; and men ought to pay a more than ordinary respect to those persons, whom God hath honoured with a privilege, not imparted to the very angels themselves. For they, who are regularly ordained in the Church, are the only persons acting by his commission; they use the form

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appointed by Christ himself, and have a constant mighty effect attending upon their due administration. But still our thoughts and wonder must not terminate in them, as if by *their own* power and holiness they could work such mighty things. For they are only instruments; and therefore we must carry our meditations higher, even to God himself, for he is the first and principal cause, he the invisible worker of this miracle of mercy. It is his Word, which made, and governs all things, that only can command material and common elements to produce spiritual and extraordinary effects, and strengthen and refresh the souls of the faithful, by the Body and Blood of Christ; at the same time, and with as certain operation, as their bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine.

When therefore thou approachest the sacramental table, rest not in the testimony of thy senses, nor dwell upon the *outward and visible signs*; but let thy faith carry thee on to *the inward and spiritual Grace*, and exercise it self in contemplating the Almighty Power of God. And thou, to whom the invoking this Power, and its efficacious presence, is committed, be careful that thou do it with awful reverence and godly fear: Consider whose minister thou art, and what a glorious character thou hast received by the imposition of the bishop's hands. For thou art ordained a priest for noble and religious purposes. The excellence of thy office consists, in giving thy Master's family their portion of meat, in due manner and season. Be faithful therefore in the execution of this important trust; proceed in it with a fervent and exemplary devotion, and let it be thy first care, to offer up thyself, an unreprouable sacrifice to God. Do not imagine any part of thy privilege to consist, in an exemption

emption from the duties incumbent upon common Christians. Alas! thy burden is not less but greater, thy temptations more and fiercer, thy danger more imminent, for being thus distinguished. For, it will be expected, that the sanctity of thy manners, the severity of thy virtue, the conquest of thy passions, the perfection of thy holiness, the fervency and zeal of thy devotion, should distinguish thee, as visibly, as eminently, as thy garb and thy profession do. That thou should'st be cloath'd and adorn'd with that righteousness, that innocence, that gravity, of which thy robe is a significant emblem; and, as thou art become a leader, thou should'st likewise be an example to the flock. For the conversation of such persons should be no longer conformable to the customs and corrupt examples of the world, but conformed to the angels in heaven, or to the saints that excel in virtue upon earth.

When thou entrest into the holy place, and there puttest on the garments of thy function, consider what thou art going about, and what an eminent office thou hast obtained; no less than to be the representative of the Great High-priest in heaven, and to minister in his stead unto his people. First, therefore, with all humility, bewail thy own unworthiness, and confess thy own sins. Then with a most extensive charity, and tender compassion, bemoan, and intercede for the sins of others. Consider thy self as a Mediator between God and transgressors; to offer up their prayers, confessions, and thanksgivings to him; and to hand down his pardon and blessing to them. And be not slothful or thoughtless, careless or cold in this affair; for it is of the utmost importance, and requires thy most diligent attention, thy most earnest importunity, thy most indefatigable perseverance; never to be abated,

abated, till thou hast gained thy point, and prevailed for mercy and grace, by those unwearied wrestlings with God. But, when thou celebratest the holy Supper, remember, thou art employed in a work, which all heaven and earth are concerned in. A work, which, when performed as it ought, brings honour to God, joy to the blessed angels, edification to the Church of Christ, conversion to sinners, peace to wounded consciences, comfort to the afflicted, strength to the feeble, and to thy self abundance of grace, and an exceeding great reward.

CHAP. VII.

A Preparatory Exercise before the Sacrament.

(*Disciple.*)

BEhold, Lord, with thy wonted mercy, the doubts and confusions of my troubled heart. For, when I look up to heaven, and consider the Majesty of my great, my holy God; and from thence turn my eyes back upon my self, and view my own vileness and horrible sinfulness; I am all perplexity, and distraction and horror. Thou commandest me to come; and if I refuse or neglect to comply with that gracious invitation, I reject my own mercy, and deprive my self of life and happiness. But if I come unworthily, I am equally miserable; and shall be punished for the high indignity, of bringing so polluted a guest, to so pure and heavenly a feast. What Course then shall I take to be safe, when danger and death threaten on either

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hand?

hand? I will even fly to thee, my God; and instead of consulting with flesh and blood, or listening to the deceitful insinuations of my too rash, or too timorous reason, will ask counsel of thee, my infallible and only oracle in distresses.

Instruct me, I beseech thee, in the right way, and lead me in such methods of holy preparation, as may be proper and suitable to so exalted an act of religion. I know that these approaches to thee, in the blessed Sacrament, are exceeding beneficial and delightful; but make me know withal, in what manner thou must be approached, to render that, which in itself is desirable, safe and profitable to me in particular. Give me, I pray thee, a due sense of the greatness of the mystery, and the excellence of thy mercy in it; and, consequent to that, fill my soul with pure and holy affections, with earnest longings, with godly sorrow, with sincere and stedfast resolutions, with profound reverence and fervent devotion; that my heart may be a clean, though homely mansion for my Saviour, such as he will not disdain; and I so well-disposed a guest at this Divine Feast, this Spiritual Sacrifice, that thou may'st bid me welcome to thy table, and the food I receive there may nourish me up to happiness and life eternal. *Amen.*

CHAP. VIII.

Of Self-Examination, and Purpose of Amendment.

(*Christ.*)

A*Bove all keepings, keep thy heart; and, whether minister or private Christian, be very careful, that, at thy coming to my holy table, thy devotion*
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consist not in outward gesture, and pomp and shew only. I am not to be imposed upon with such empty formalities, but require a sincere, humble, and devout mind; a mind low and prostrate as thy Body, a stedfast faith and pure intention, and unfeigned zeal for God's honour. Therefore, before thou presume to approach, examine well, how thou art qualified. Search every corner of thy conscience, and do thy utmost to purge and cast out all remains of the old leaven. Let no sin, enrepented of, reproach thee; no lust unmortified divide thy affections, and prevent thy free and absolute resignation to my will. Conceive a just hatred and indignation against all thy sins in general; and for those, which are either too gross to be overlooked, or too habitual to be forgotten, express a particular and proportionable resentment of sorrow and shame. And, if thou have time, at leisure look well into the irregularities of all thy passions, and, in thy private retirements, make a full confession to them, between God and thy own soul.

Recollect and bewail the unhappy prevalence of worldly and carnal affections; every exorbitant desire, every ungoverned passion. Take notice, how the motions of evil concupiscence abound and domineer; how negligent thou art in thy outward behaviour, and the general tenor of thy conversation; how easily thou art deluded by vanity; how vehemently disposed to the gratifications of appetite and sense; how careless and stupid in the momentous concerns of thy soul; how apt to let thyself loose to laughter and extravagant mirth, and how exceeding backward to mourn for thy sins with a sincere, saving, and necessary contrition; how eagerly thou pursuest the pleasures and advantages of the body, and how heavy and slothful thou art in the exercises

of mortification and godly zeal; how mighty curious and inquisitive after news and trifles, and greedy to be entertained with every pomp and beauty that can please thy sight; but how careless and backward, how full of disregard and disdain, to things of less gay appearance, but of true inward worth, and mighty consequence to thy better state; how greedy of gain; how sparing in thy alms; how tenacious of this world's goods; how inconsiderate in thy discourse, how childish and trifling, how wicked or obscene; how lavish and profuse; and what a torment it is to *set a guard before thy mouth, and keep the door of thy lips*; Pl. clxi. how affected or extravagant in thy behaviour, how eager in thy actions, how inordinate in thy appetites; but how slow and deaf to the Word of God; how unattentive in hearing, and how inflexible to be persuaded by what thou hast heard; how inclinable to rest and ease, and how averse to labour and necessary care; how wakeful and attentive at plays, or balls, and how drowsy and lifeless in prayer and holy duties; how impatient till they are done; and how full of wandering and impertinent thoughts, while they are in doing; how easily diverted from thy stated hours of devotion; how lukewarm in receiving the blessed Sacrament; how unsettled in thy mind at the very time of communicating, and how barren and unprofitable afterwards; how soon provoked to anger upon every trifling miscarriage, and yet how apt to give offence to others; how prone to judge, and too severely to censure thy brethren; how stiff and positive in those judgments and hard constructions: How insolent and immoderately exalted with good fortune, and how feeble and dejected under every cross and disappointment: How

How full of good intentions, and how few of those intentions have any good effect.

These, and many other defects, of which each man's own conscience can best inform him, it is thy duty very strictly to examine into; to bewail seriously, to confess with the profoundest humility, and with firm purpose of amendment for the time to come. When this is done, then, without any secret reserve to thy own inclinations, resign thyself up entirely to God, to be governed by him, and offer to the glory of his Name *thy soul and body, a holy, living and reasonable sacrifice*. Thus shalt thou come to me worthily, and receive my mystical Body to thy infinite advantage.

For there is no other satisfaction in man's power to make for his great indignities, and manifold provocations against the Majesty on high; no oblation more acceptable than that of a *broken and contrite*, a pure and upright heart, offered to God in this Sacrament. He desires nothing but thyself, and he desires this, not for his, but for thy own sake. He who brings it, need not in the least doubt acceptance; for God never despises or rejects a true penitent, but embraces returning prodigals, with the tenderness of a Father; and grants them pardon for the past, and grace for the future. His Word, nay, his Oath is passed, And he who cannot lie may surely be depended upon. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; Ezek. xviii. and 'at what time soever the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; repent therefore, and turn your selves from*

from all your transgressions, and so iniquity shall not be your ruin. For I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. Heb. viii.

CHAP. IX.

Of Christ's Oblation; your Resignation.

(*Christ.*)

BEhold, and take example by me. I hung upon the cross, with a naked body, and stretch'd-out arms, and, in this manner, offered myself to my Father for thy sin. There was no part of me but what was given in atonement, to appease the wrath of thy justly incensed Judge. And thou in like manner must think it thy duty, freely and entirely to give up thyself, a clean and holy sacrifice. Every power, every affection of soul must be consecrated to me, in the blessed Sacrament. What doth the Lord require of thee, but to consult thy own interest, and save thyself, by conveying over thyself to me? Whatever else thou dedicatest to my service, is of no value, no consideration with me; for, I seek not thine, but thee.

As all the world besides would fail of procuring thy happiness and satisfaction, if deprived of me; so all thy wealth and gifts set apart for my use, can never be well-pleasing in my sight, unless with them thou givest thy own self. My whole person was sacrificed for thy redemption; either

either of my natures single had been insufficient to propitiate for thy sins; my whole Body and Blood is set upon my table for thy entertainment; and what can be the meaning of all this, but that I should be entirely thine, and thou entirely mine? But, if thou art not sincere in this oblation, if it be made with any *Proviso's* and exceptions; the offering is not perfect, the sacrifice is maimed, defective in its parts; and the union, which should follow upon it, must be proportionably lame and imperfect. The first thing therefore to be taken care of, is the liberal and full resignation of thy person. This must recommend and sanctify all thy other acts of religion; and, till thou art released from the bondage of divided affections, thou canst not attain grace and true liberty. Hence it is, and upon no other account, that, of so many professors, and seemingly good Christians, so very few stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free. The condition is fixed and irreversible, *If a man forsake not at all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* Luke xiv. And therefore, if thou desire to be found in this happy number, enter my courts with a free-will offering, and consecrate every inclination, every faculty of thy soul. Have no love, no desires, but mine. *Submit thyself wholly to my holy will and pleasure, and study to serve me truly in holiness and righteousness all the days, in all the actions of thy life.*

CHAP. X.

An Act of Self-resignation.

(Disciple.)

IT is very meet, right, and my bounden duty, that I should do whatever thou requirest of me: For this, O Lord, is but to give thee of thy own. Heaven and earth are thine, and all that is therein. I desire with singleness of heart, to dedicate myself to thee, never to retract the gift, but to continue thine for ever. Accept me therefore entirely devoted to thy service from this day forward, a sacrifice of praise and perpetual thanksgiving. I call those blessed spirits to witness, who, tho' invisible to human eyes, constantly assist at our solemn acts of religious worship: Humbly beseeching thee, that the oblation of thy dear Son's blessed Body and Blood, represented in this Sacrament, may be effectual for the salvation of me, and of all thy faithful people.

I offer to thee, Lord, my manifold sins and transgressions, my corrupt inclinations and vicious habits, which from my infancy even until now, have so grievously provoked thy wrath and just indignation, to be a whole burnt-sacrifice. Slay them, O Lord, before thy altar, and consume them in the fire of thy love that not the least spot of guilt may remain behind. Purge my conscience from their stain, and blot them out of the book of thy remembrance. Restore to me thy grace, which my sins and wilful neglects have so often forfeited. Give me the comfort of thy help again, and establish me with thy free, thy renewing Spirit; Ps. li. and, having

having sealed a full pardon for what is past, receive me to thy fatherly embraces, and assure me of thy affection, by a kiss of reconciliation and peace.

What satisfaction can I make for injuries and bold affronts which I offered to thy righteous laws, but that alone of humble confession, deep sorrow, and hearty prayers, for thy acceptance of thy son's atonement? I do most sincerely and heartily bewail and detest all my wickednesses, and, by thy grace will never be guilty of the like any more. I do, and will to the last moment of my life grieve for these follies; and am desirous, by my future behaviour, to testify the truth of my repentance, and make the best reparation I am able, for the scandal I have formerly given. O Lord, pardon; O Lord, forgive; defer not for thy own sake, O my God; but let thy mercy be glorified in sparing the soul of thy servant, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious Blood. Behold, I commit myself wholly to thy mercy, and yield my spirit into thy Hands. O deal with me according to thy great goodness, and not after my sins and grievous wickedness.

To thee I humbly offer all in me that is good. A very poor imperfect offering, I with shame confess it; but, worthless as it is, yet I beseech thee to accept it. Supply my defects, sanctify and exalt what is debased with infirmity or impure mixtures; disdain not my sincere, tho' weak endeavours; enable me daily to do better; and at length raise this slothful, unprofitable creature, to such degrees of virtue and successful activity, as may, by the more diligent use of thy grace, end in a happy and glorious eternity.

I also offer up to thee the prayers and good wishes of all that have interceded for me, or desir-

ed my intercessions for them : The necessities and distresses for my friends and relations, and all that have done good to me, or others, for thy sake; entreating thee, that thou would'st assist them by thy grace, comfort them in their troubles, protect them in all dangers, deliver them from punishment and death eternal; and so rescue them from evil, that they may magnify thy good providence, and with grateful heart rejoice in thy mercy.

In a more especial manner, accept, I humbly beseech thee, my hearty prayers, and peace-offerings, for all, who have wronged me in word or deed, who have given me any disturbance by ill treatment, slander'd or reviled me with ill language, or caused me any manner of uneasiness, or angry resentment. And likewise, for all, whom I have injured, grieved, or offended, by word or deed, knowingly or ignorantly, with, or without design; intreating thy forgiveness for all that hath been done, or taken amiss on either side. Take away, thou who lovedst and gavest thy own life for thy enemies, all rancour and malice, all grudges and revengeful thoughts, all passionate remembrances and dispositions to strife and debate, all that may be inconsistent with true charity, or tend to the decay of brotherly love. Have mercy, Lord, on all, who sue for mercy; supply the necessities of all that want; and grant us all such measures of thy grace, and so constant perseverance in it, that we may grow up to such degrees, as this mortal state is capable of here, and may receive our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory. *Amen.*

CHAP. XI.

*The Sin and Danger of Absenting from the
Lord's Supper.*

(Christ.)

IT is by no means sufficient, that men do once, or very rarely, come to this holy Sacrament; but, as their occasions and necessities are many and frequent, so should their care in seeking supplies be. The passions of the soul are daily in commotion, and its diseases and evil habits get ground by their malignant spreading quality. The temptations of the devil are seldom intermitted; or, if they be, 'tis only out of a wicked design, that even those intervals of quiet may contribute the more effectually to men's destruction. And if this be, as most certainly it is thy case, consider then, how urgent thy wants are, and how frequent thy returns ought to be to this Fountain of Divine Grace; that here thou mayest drink living Water, and quench the raging thirst of thy soul; that here thou may'st receive balm into thy wounds, and apply proper remedies to thy many indispositions; that thou may'st grow more wise and cautious by such recollections, more clearly understand thy own state, by those examinations, which prepare thee for my Table; and, by repeating this sacred Feast, be strengthened against the assaults of the enemy, and be more upon thy guard against his subtle insinuations. And one of his insinuations it certainly is, to hinder and draw men off from frequent communion; as being very sensible how great and happy advan-

tages they reap by doing so; and, that this is the very best course they can possibly take of securing themselves, and defeating his malicious endeavours to debauch and destroy their souls.

For this reason, Christians are not to think it strange, if they find the devil then more especially busy, when they set themselves, with more than usual earnestness, to the preparation for, or the exercise of, the most solemn and exalted acts of religion. For this wicked spirit, as the history of *Job* intimates, *Job* i. is always industrious to mingle himself with the sons of God, when they appear before their heavenly Father. He contrives then to give them great disturbance, to damp their joys, and break their holy purposes, by suggesting many fears, and distracting their minds with unnecessary scruples. He terrifies them with *eating and drinking their own damnation*, and keeps them back by mistaken notions of their unworthiness and danger. If he can either thus prevail, for a total neglect of this Sacrament, or contrive, that they shall come full of doubt, and dissatisfaction, he gains his point. But be not ignorant of his devices; instruct thyself rightly in thy duty, and wherein unworthiness does truly consist; that nothing but want of sincerity and true reverence, can work thee any danger; and then despise his vain attempts to discompose and undo all thy good intentions. Retort his wicked craft back upon his own head, by being more watchful, more careful, more resolved; but by no means neglect this duty, nor suffer thyself to be diverted from that communion, which is the sovereign antidote, the best preservative against sin and temptation.

If he endeavours to disguise his devilish arts, under the specious colour of caution and humility,
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and want of more perfect devotion; lay aside thy unprofitable and disquieting anxieties, and apply for succour and advice to some godly pastor. Let his prudence direct thy doubting steps, and unbosom thyself freely to him; that, by confessing thy sins, and opening thy case to the Physician of souls, thou may'st receive the benefit of ghostly counsel, and the comfort of absolution. Know, that no sin can hurt thee, or render thee an unworthy receiver, when once confess'd, and seriously repented of; and that, when this is done, all thy doubts and perplexities cannot hinder the Grace of God, nor check thy improvement in piety and devotion. Let not any common trouble or affliction hinder thee from coming to thy Lord for relief; but make the greater haste to reconcile thyself to God, and purge away those offences, which may have provoked, and drawn down the affliction upon thee. Let not any difference between thee and thy brethren prevent thee; for there is a short and ready way of removing this obstruction, thy forgiving and praying for those who have grieved or wronged thee; and by reconciling thyself, and asking pardon of those, whom thou hast offended. And, if they still be so obstinate, as not to be reconciled upon a due submission; yet consider, their perverseness and wickedness ought to be no hindrance to the performance of thy duty. Thou hast done thy part, and God will be sure to forgive, and accept thy person, though men should prove inexorable.

What benefit can a man possibly propose to himself from delaying the duty of examination and repentance, and forbearing to come to the holy Communion? Without doubt, when one is diseased, the greatest wisdom is to get well again as soon as possibly he can: To expel the malignity, and discharge

charge the venom immediately. Thus will the cure be easier, more speedy, and more successful. For every delay adds to the distemper, and gathers fresh and more obstinate matter. If you neglect the present opportunity upon one pretence, another and more prevailing may intervene, and deprive you of the next. And thus, by degrees, you will be wrought upon to excuse thyself again and again, and by longer abstinence become less fit, as well as more unwilling, to return to your duty. Whatever burthen then you find upon your mind, get rid of it betimes; do not indulge your sloth and backwardness a moment; for there never can come any good of prolonging your cares and troubles, and making the common hindrances of worldly business a reason for neglecting your great, your eternal interest. This is most evident, and experience will prove the truth of it when it is too late; that, the longer you defer communicating, the less you will find your self disposed to it; and a strange indifference and disregard for holy exercises will insensibly creep upon your mind, and get a mighty head. But, which is a most lamentable thing to consider, many loose and dissolute, nay, many thoughtless and lukewarm people, allow themselves in this indifference; and industriously seek pretences to delay their repentance and approaches to the Lord's Table, merely to avoid, as they imagine, the necessity of parting with their darling lusts, and the keeping that strict guard upon their conduct, without which they must be undne to all eternity.

How cold, alas! is those mens love for me? How feeble their devotion, who can, upon such frivolous pretences, dispense with this so necessary a duty, so glorious a privilege, of communicating at my Table?

ble? How happy, how easy to himself, how acceptable, how dear to God is that man, whose conversation is so strictly virtuous, whose conscience so void of stain and reproach, that he could every day most chearfully, most safely, partake of this heavenly feast, were the opportunities of doing it equal to his willingness, and might his zeal escape the censure of a needless ostentation? For, no man is immediately to be condemned, who does not seek, or embrace every possible occasion of communicating. There may be some reasons for absenting very allowable, and others even commendable. If out of deep humility, and awful reverence, or as a voluntary punishment inflicted upon a man's self for some grievous relapse, he impose this penance, and therefore treads to come: The respect paid to the ordinance, or the holy indignation conceived against himself, may be better accepted, and more becoming than receiving in such circumstances. But this must not be so far indulged, that long disuse should produce indifference and disregard for the Sacrament. For, if once the soul degenerate into neglect and spiritual sloth, all possible endeavours must be used to awaken it; not in the least doubting, but that God will be ever present with the assistances of his Grace, and second thy care with success, proportionable to thy vigour and diligence, and the sincerity of thy good intentions.

But one thing must be observ'd, that when the hindrances to communicating are real, and important, and necessary; not trifling excuses industriously sought, or readily laid hold on, to cover impiety and negligence; the person so detained is present in wish and inclination, though not in actual attendance. And then the benefit of the Sacrament, and all the saving effects of it, are as fully imparted to him,

him, as his appearance in the congregation, and the elements themselves could have yield him. For 'tis a great mistake to imagine, that good men receive not the advantages of Christ's Body and Blood, except just at the time when they receive the outward and visible signs of them. Every day, every hour furnishes opportunities of communicating spiritually; and a man thus compos'd can never be surprized, never find any difficulty to comply with any occasion of doing it publicly. For, an innocent life, and a devout mind, are a constant preparation. But, when the usual seasons return, and especially the solemn festivals, wherein the great and glorious mysteries of the Christian religion are commemorated; then such a person will think it his duty to join with the publick assemblies, in this sublimest instance of piety and thanksgiving; he will approach with a heart full of affection and reverence; and esteem this homage due, not only to himself for the comforts and advantages he may expect from it, but more peculiarly to me, for the honour and tribute of praise, by which my Name and mercies ought to be thus magnified, and my Name exalted among men. And this is a fruit which can only redound to be my open and visible acts of worship. Whereas the other of private improvement and mystical Communion with Christ, is attained in secret, and constantly follows upon every religious meditation concerning my incarnation, and sufferings, or any other of the mysterious works, by which the redemption of mankind was compleated, and the pious affections of Christians are cherished and inflamed.

They, who reserve themselves for the feasts of the Church only, and are not careful to put their souls in a due posture for receiving, except only when



*A blind Beggar sitting by the Road-side, where
Jesus passed, enquired who he was. Luke 18. 36, 37.*



when such solemnities call them to it, are seldom or never prepared as they ought to be. That man is a truly secure and happy man, who makes it his frequent practice, and constantly offers up himself a sacrifice to his God. In the act of communicating, keep rule and order, and let not thy haste or impatience, the length of thy private devotions, or any other singularity of thy own fancy, give disturbance to the common usages and ceremonies of the congregation, whereof thou art a member. For be assured of this, that, even in this part of worship, where zeal and devotion are most acceptable ingredients, yet these very qualifications, when indulged out of season and measure, lose all their value; and are not half so pleasing in the sight of God, as unaffected modesty, and an humble decent compliance with the establish'd orders and usages of the Church, and the convenience of others; who ought not to be disturbed, or incommoded, for the humorous or peculiar ways of any private person whatsoever.

CHAP. XII.

*The Body of Christ, and the holy Scriptures,
both necessary to a pious Soul.*

(Disciple.)

O Sweetest, dearest Jesus! Who can conceive or express the charms, the transports of that soul, which feasts with thee at thy Table; that Table, where no common food is placed, but the

Divine Entertainment of thy own Body and Blood; An Entertainment exquisitely delicious, above all that the tongue can express, or thoughts imagine! What satisfaction should we take to come into thy tabernacle, and fall low on our knees before thy footstool, to open wide our hearts for the Refreshments of thy House, and, with *Mary Magdalene*, to wash thy holy feet with tears of love? But where, alas! is thy devotion to be found? Where are those eyes overflowing with pious sorrow? Or, if that sorrow be swallow'd up in joy, yet ought we not even thus to approach thee with dry eyes, but tears of joy should trickle down apace, when we consider our mighty privilege, and the happiness of being admitted to thy blessed presence, and partakers of the bliss of angels. For, as they really behold thy face in glory, so am I firmly persuaded that I shall see and receive thee, in the mystical elements; tho' cover'd there under a different form, and shrouded in a veil of bread and wine.

I adore thy goodness, which thus condescends to the infirmities of human nature, and in much compassion is pleased, under these sensible representations of thy Body and Blood, to hide that glorious Majesty, whose native lustre is too piercing bright for me, or any created being, to behold in its full strength. But tho' my eyes cannot see thee as thou art; yet here, I know, I have thee most effectually: And do therefore most humbly adore that Divinity on earth, before which angels prostrate themselves in heaven. I do it indeed through a glass, and I gaze only with the eyes of faith; *1 Cor. xiii.* but they are permitted to do it *face to face, and to know even as they are known.* And, tho' this glass be obscure and dim, yet it is such as I ought to be satisfied with, since mortality admits of nothing better;

ter; nor can I attain any higher perfection, till the day of everlasting life dawn, and the thick shadows of figures are scattered by its brightness. When that which is perfect shall come, then will all use for Sacraments be discontinued, and for ever cease. For these are remedies and expedients, fitted only to a state of frailty and imperfection, such as the Blessed above have no occasion for. They are in endless and unspotted perfection, and ever rejoicing in the beams of thy glorious presence. They see thee as thou art, and are transformed into the excellencies they see. 1 *John* iii. They taste the Word made Flesh, not in the symbols of his human nature, but in the native charms of his divine; as he was the Word of God from all eternity, and shall continue so to be for ever.

When these ideas, so full of wonder, employ my thoughts, I not only feel a generous contempt of worldly comforts, but am induced to entertain but a small value for those spiritual and better consolations, which thy grace at present diffuses through my soul. And all besides seem mean and despicable, so long as I am debarred the sight of my love and Lord. Thou knowest the secrets of my heart, and wilt bear testimony to the sincerity of those professions I make; when I declare, that nothing less than God, whom I most earnestly long for ever to contemplate, can satisfy and fill the impatient desires of my enlarged soul. But this I am sensible is a Blessing, not to be obtained in this state of mortality, and therefore I will set myself with patience to wait the time appointed for it. Thus did thy saints of old, who now partake of the joys and kingdom of their Lord. Their faith was vigorous, and their perseverance unshaken and constant, their thirstings eager, but their patience exemplary

and humble ; till the coming of their Lord, which they thought long, at last released, and exalted them. My hope, my faith are now the same, which theirs were then ; and, I am persuaded my joy and crown shall, by thy grace and mercy, be one day the same too. Till that come, I will tread in their steps, and support myself by the contemplation of their bright examples. Thy holy Scriptures shall be my comfort : In them, as in a glass, I will examine and beautify my soul ; And above all, thy blessed body and blood shall be my spiritual sustenance. Here will I seek for strength against infirmities, here apply balm to my wounds, and physick to my spiritual diseases, and hither fly for refuge, in all my fears, and dangers, and temptations.

Two things are evidently necessary to the preservation of life, without which no misery could be so insupportable, as that of living here. The melancholly confinement of this prison of flesh can only be endured by the help of food and light. Thy mercy hath not left us destitute of this provision ; but brought thy holy Body for my refreshment and sustenance, and thy holy Word for a *lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths*. Psal. cxix. To these I owe, not my comfort alone, but even my life itself. For the word of God is the light of the soul, and the Sacrament of his Death is the Bread of Life. These are the two Tables of the Christian, resembling those of the antient *Jewish* Church ; where the Divine Treasures are exhibited and preserved. The one, like that of the shew bread, furnished most richly with symbols of thy precious Body ; *Heb. ix.* the other, like the repository of the law, containing holy doctrines, prescribing
true

true and saving faith, and leading us within the veil to the most holy place.

All honour, and praise, and thanksgiving, be to the blessed Jesus, Light of eternal uncreated Light, for the Table of his heavenly doctrine, spread and adorned by the ministry of his inspired servants, the prophets, apostles, and other holy writers, taught by himself, to the end that they might teach us. All glory and thanks be to the great Creator and merciful Redeemer of mankind, for his extensive tender love, in preparing a plentiful feast for all the world. Not like that paschal lamb of old which was no more than a type and shadow, but the very substance of that shadow, the accomplishment of that type; even *Christ our passover sacrificed for us*, and exhibited to us. This Bread sustains, this Cup cheers and rejoices the hearts of the faithful. It fills them with the overflowing delights of paradise, is a pledge and foretaste of heaven, and, allowing for the difference of condition, admits us into partnership with angels themselves. The joy of both is the same, tho' both cannot receive it in equal proportion.

How high and honourable is that function, to which God hath permitted, nay enjoined some, to minister in these holy things; to handle and deliver this blessed Bread, and give each servant his portion of Life by and with it, to implore with wonderful efficacy the divine blessing, and exalt natural and common things, to purposes and effects infinitely exceeding all the powers of nature? How clean should those hands, how pure those lips, how chaste and holy should that body be, which so frequently, so familiarly converses with, and are united to, the Author and perfection of all purity? Sure nothing of corrupt communication, nothing indecent,

cent, nothing vain or trifling, nothing but what may tend to edifying, ought to proceed out of that mouth, which so often blesses, and consecrates, and takes into it, the Sacrament of his dying Redeemer. How should those eyes be turned away from vanity, how immovably fixed upon heavenly objects, which see their Lord's mystical Body, and invite his peculiar presence, so frequently brought upon the altar, by virtue of their being lifted up to the Throne of Grace, in benedictions and prayers which he himself instituted?

To men of this profession under the law, no doubt, that precept was in a more especial manner intended, *Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.* Levit. xix. But sure the sanctity and exemplary lives of priests under the Gospel ought as much to excel those of the sons of *Aaron*, as our ministration exceeds theirs in glory. And therefore, O blessed God, grant thy grace to all who are admitted to this holy office; and thou, who alone workest great marvels, exert thy Almighty power, in enabling every such person to serve at thine altar, with clean hands, and a pure heart, with a becoming zeal, and moving devotion; such as may not only suit their own character, but be a pattern and powerful incitement to the piety of others. And if we cannot, (as indeed we are still but men, and in many things offend all) if we can not minister in thy presence in pure unblemished innocence, or come not up to all those eminent degrees of perfection, which we might and ought, yet let at least our deep and godly sorrow expiate our offences; and our resolutions of entire reformation, and more eminent piety and devotion for the time to come, our unfeigned humility and charity unconfined, and labours indefatigable, make such
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reparation, as thou wilt please graciously to accept for the miscarriages occasioned by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by our own carnal will and the frailties and infirmities incident to our natures.

CHAP. XIII.

*A due Preparation necessary to the
Communion.*

(*Christ.*)

I Am a lover of holiness, and I give what I love. A pure heart is the thing I delight in, and this is the place of my rest. Furnish me thy largest room, and I will come and eat the passover at thy house with my disciples. purge out thy old leaven, and dress up every corner of thy heart; sweep it clean from the world, and cleanse it from all the filth of thy sins; if thou sincerely desire that I should come and make my abode with thee. Sit as a sparrow alone upon the house-top and mourn in thy closet for all thy transgressions whereby thou hast offended; so will I be with thee, and comfort thee, in the bitterness of thy soul. Thy careful preparation will be the natural consequence of thy sincerity and respect for me. For every lover provides his best apartment to entertain his friend, and best beloved; and by his diligence to receive so agreeable a guest, expresses the reality and greatness of his affection.

But now withal, that when thou hast done thy
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utmost, that even whole years, bestowed in preparation, cannot effect what in strict justice is due to me. That thou art admitted to my Table, and received kindly there, is owing, after all, not to thy own merit, but to my grace and mercy, which accepts thy weak endeavours, and passes by thy sinful unworthiness. If beggars, with their nakedness and sores, have leave to sit and feast with princes; their duty is, with humility and thankfulness, to acknowledge the mighty favour. Do then thy part, and do it in the best manner thou art able; do it diligently and heartily; come not as by compulsion, but come willingly and gladly; come not for fashion's sake, but come with reverence, and godly fear, and fervent zeal. When thy Saviour condescends to visit thee, refuse him not, nor turn thy back and flee from his Table. I have invited, I have commanded thee to come; let not thy infirmities discourage thee, for they are all perfectly known to me; and I will consider and make allowances for them, and what is wanting in nature, shall be supplied by grace.

When thou feelest thy heart burn with love and devotion, return thy thanks to God for kindling these holy fires. I did it, because I had compassion on thy weakness and thy wants. When thou findest thyself cold and insensible in religious duties, double thy diligence and thy prayers, lament thy deadness, and continue knocking. *Matth. vii. and xv.* For if thou persevere, and wilt take no denial, thou shalt not ask in vain, but be fed, at least with the crumbs that fall from thy master's table. Thou standest in need of me, but I have none of thee. It is for thy bene-

benefit, not my own, that I vouchsafe to meet thee at this Sacrament. Thou comest hither to be filled, and strengthened, and sanctified, to return better than thou camest, to receive increase of grace, to be one with me, and dwell in me; and those, who come sincerely disposed to receive me, and amend their life, I will in no wise send empty away. Do not then neglect those precious opportunities; do not absent, or come carelessly; but make me room in thy heart, and let it be a clean and fit reception for so pure a guest, and he whom thou lovest, will go home with thee to thy house.

But then observe, that there is the same necessity of care and watchfulness *after* this Sacrament, as of prayer and preparation *before* it. For a constant virtuous life, and strict guard over a man's self, are the best and most effectual preparation to every Sacrament, and the surest means of obtaining more and greater degrees of grace. A man, who presently returns to the world, and gives himself a loose to the liberties and affections, the business and the pleasures of it, undoes what he hath taken pains to do before; and defeats the good effects of his most solemn preparation. Be not fond of variety of company and diversions; nor lavish and unwary in thy discourse; but rather chuse to retire into thy chamber, and converse much with God in solitude and silence. When thou hast him, thou possessest a treasure which nothing can deprive thee of. I am worthy of thee all, and I expect thee all. Divide not thyself between me and the world, but let me be thy love, thy joy, thy desire. *So shall thy life be hid with Christ in God*; Colos. iii. and, tho' thou canst not live in thy self, yet thou shalt live in me; full of peace and tranquility, far above

the disorderly passions, and rustling cares, of sensual and earthly-minded men.

CHAP. XIV.

*The Union with Christ is the Desire of
a devout Soul.*

(*Disciple.*)

I Hear thy gracious words, my dearest LORD, and readily believe the inexpressible happiness contained in them, whose souls thy heavenly presence fills. But how, O! how shall I attain that bliss? How shall I seek and find my God alone? how enlarge my heart to entertain thee, so as to exclude all other intruding guests? O! that no man, no creature might from henceforth find place in my affections and desires, so as to interrupt my conversation with thee! When shall I get loose from company and care, and enjoy and talk with thee alone, in language free and kind, as that of dearest friends; and soft and tender, sweet and charming, as the unreserved retirements and endearing whispers of the most passionate lovers? This is my earnest wish, this my constant prayer, that my heart may be knit entirely to thee; and, weaned from every earthly and sensual delight, learn to taste heavenly and eternal joys, by frequent returns to thy holy Communion. Ah when, my God, shall I be wholly thine, regardless of myself, and quite swallowed up in a blissful indissoluble

luble union with Christ? *Thou, Lord, in me, and I in thee*; John xvii. and thus may we continue for ever!

Thou verily art my Beloved, my Chosen, the Chiefest among ten thousand, the Friend of my bosom, with whom alone I desire to dwell all the days of my life. Thou art my peace, and only comfort; without thee I find nothing but labour and sorrow, vexation, and torment, and misery insupportable. Thou art a *God that hidest thyself*; thou dost not deal thy blessings promiscuously, but, with wise and just distinction, satisfying the humble and meek with the pleasures of thy word, while thou concealest thy counsel from the wicked, and leavest them to groan and howl, in the anguish and horror of their guilty souls! O how great is thy bounty! how sweet thy mercy! who refreshest thy hungry servants with the delicious Bread, which came down from heaven; that thy faithful children might eat thereof and not die. Surely there is no nation under heaven, which hath God so near to them, as the Lord our God is unto us, in all that we call upon him for. For he *healeth the broken in heart*, Ps. cxlii. *he hath respect unto the lowly*; Psal. cxxxviii. *he lifteth the simple out of the dust, and raiseth the needy from the dunghil, to set them with princes*, Ps. cxliii. to equal them with angels; nay, to give them his flesh for the satisfying their hunger, and, when they are thirsty, the wine of his Blood to drink.

What society of men can boast of privileges, worthy to be mentioned with those of the Christian Church? What creature is there under heaven, whose excellence and happiness is comparable to that of the pious and devout soul, where God himself takes up his abode, and sustains the heart that

entertains him, with his own glorious Body? O grace unspeakable! O condescension most amazing! O love unmeasurable! Lord, what is man, that thou should'st thus visit him? Or what returns can he make unto God for these inestimable benefits? Alas! I have no return to make, but a poor worthless heart. And this is yet a farther instance of thy condescending goodness, that thou expectest no other testimony of gratitude, but myself, and my sincere affection. Thus hast thou made our duty our greatest happiness: For then shall my soul rejoice, and all that is within me leap for joy, when my heart is perfectly united to my God. Then shalt thou say, *If thou wilt be mine, I will live and dwell with thee for ever*: And I with humble joy reply, *Disdain not, Lord, this mean and homely dwelling, for I most willingly, most thankfully embrace the offer. Lo, I am intirely thine, from this moment, and, above all things, wish, and pray, that the intimacy and friendship thus contracted, may continue firm and inviolable, that nothing may abate our love and the delights of it, or ever part our persons any more.*

CHAP. XV.

An Act of enlivening Devotion from the Example of Others.

(Disciple.)

O How plentiful is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! Psal. xxxi.
When I reflect with what ardent piety, with what af-

affectionate devotion, with what a fervent zeal thy saints approach this heavenly Supper; I am quite overwhelmed with shame and confusion, conscious of my own, but lukewarm at the best, and too often perfectly stupid and frozen heart; with what indifference and goodness I approach thy mysteries, and how unaffected with thy mercies, how unprofitable under the gracious dispensation, I return. What a reproach is it, that my heart should not be wholly inflamed with the excess of thy love; that I should have so little sense, so little apprehension, of my greatest happiness, no more hungriings and thirstings after it? But, notwithstanding the moving examples of many excellent persons, that I should still continue void of all impressions; so shamefully unlike those pious souls, whose zeal overflow'd in tears of joy, whose hearts, as well as mouths, drink plentifully at this Fountain of life, whose appetites were so strong as never to be satisfied, till they had filled themselves with thy blessed Body, and fed liberally, and with a sort of holy luxury indulged, at the celestial Banquet.

A faith so strong, so exalted, plainly confess'd they felt thy gracious presence; and, that their Lord was known to them, as heretofore to the disciples at *Emmaus*, in *breaking of bread*. Luke xxiv. The burning of their hearts within them was an undoubted testimony of it. But how far short, alas! do I come of thy zeal and devotion? Look mercifully, Lord, upon thy infirmities. And, if an equal portion of thy Grace be too great a favour for thy poor unworthy servant; yet grant me such a degree, such a sense of thy goodness and wonderful love, that I may be as sincerely, if not so strongly, affected with it. If raptures and extasies of delight may not be my portion, yet deny me not improvement.

ment. But let my faith be strengthened, my hope confirmed, my love so warmed with this Sacrament, that, after having once tasted this heavenly Manna, I may never more desire the *onions and garlicks of Ægypt*, nor in my heart turn back from so good a God.

I know thy mercy and thy power, to which nothing is impossible, nothing hard. I know thou canst, and I hope, that, in thy own good time, thou wilt visit me with abundant measures of thy Grace, and fulfill all my desire. This confidence I cherish, because my very desires are wrought in me by thee. And it yields me some comfort, that, tho' I am sensible of my weakness and my wants, yet I long and pant after supplies and strength from thee; that I do not rest contented with my misery, but labour, and pray against my defects, and would fain be better. And thus I will continue to do, till thou remove and subdue my frailties, inspire a bright and ardent zeal, and make me a happy partaker, first of the virtuous disposition of thy devouter saints, and then of their reward and happiness.

CHAP. XVI.

Grace is the Effect of Humility and Self-denial.

(*Christ.*)

SINCE thy wishes are so commendable, and thy desires of Grace sincere, I will inform thee, how thou shalt obtain it. Know then, this blessing is withheld upon certain conditions. It must be

be sought instantly, asked fervently, waited for patiently, received thankfully, preserved by humility, improved with diligence, and the time and measures of it entirely submitted to the wisdom and goodness of the heavenly Giver. If thou perceivest few or no sparks of it in thy mind, this is a proper subject to exercise thy meekness and godly sorrow, but not to provoke despair, or immoderate concern. For, God frequently gives that in an instant, and with a bountiful Hand, which men had long expected without success: He gratifies their constancy and patience, their importunity and perseverance in prayer, with benefits, which very important reasons moved him to deny to their first requests, for the petitioner's mighty advantage.

Should mens earliest expectations be answered, or prevented, the mighty blessing would be too exquisite for frail nature to support. And therefore holy raptures, and exalted virtue, are wisely made the slow fruit of long time, and much patience. But, when thy desires are not fulfilled, when thou findest no increase of Grace, or when the Grace thou once enjoyedst is insensibly withdrawn; charge not God foolishly, but lament thy own sins, as the occasion of this unhappiness. A small provocation may sometimes be a bar to great advantages. Tho' nothing indeed ought to be accounted small, which intercepts and hinders so valuable blessings. But, whether it is little or great, let it be thy care to conquer and remove this obstruction. And then thy heart's desire shall be accomplished.

When once corrupt self-love is subdued, and thy soul entirely submitted and resigned to God, peace and satisfaction will flow in apace upon thy

thy mind. For, nothing can be grievous or distasteful to one who hath renounced all interests of his own, and hath no inclinations or desires left, but only, that he may be made an instrument of God's glory, and have all the counsel of the divine will, which is always best, fulfilled in and upon him. This man, so weaned from selfish respects and all temporal comforts, is in a proper posture for receiving grace, and tasting the spiritual delights of contemplation and devotion. The vessel must be empty, before grace can be poured in; and himself, the more heavenly-minded, the more self-denying and humble; the swifter are the motions of heavenly grace towards him, the more liberal are its distributions, the more sensible and delightful, and wonderful its comforts and effects upon his heart.

Then shall he behold the loving kindness of the Lord, then shall he feel his soul and all its powers enlarged, and even stand amazed at the happy change. Lo! Thus shall the man be blessed that fears and seeks the Lord with all his power, and suffereth not his heart to wander after vanity. This man shall receive the blessed Sacrament with wondrous efficacy. He shall as truly be united to Christ in his soul, as the bread and wine, which represents him, are incorporated with the substance of his Body. And that, which inclines God to be so peculiarly propitious and liberal to such a one, is that resigned temper of mind, which proposes the advancement of God's honour and glory, rather than his own profit; and comes to this holy Table, more out of a sense of duty and just homage to his Saviour, than with a prospect of comfort and satisfaction to himself.

CHAP. XVII.

*A Prayer to Christ, for Relief in our
Spiritual Distresses.*

(Disciple.)

Hear me, O sweetest kindest Jesus, whom I now approach, with most sincere and hearty desires of receiving thee into my soul. But how can I expect, that thou wilt not despise a place so unfit to entertain thy pure, thy glorious Majesty? Thou knowest, Lord, my infirmities and my wants; how great my sufferings, and how heinous my sins; how I am oppressed and afflicted, tempted and overpower'd; disorder'd with passion, and stained with pollution. To thee I fly for succour against my infirmities, for physick against my diseases, for support under my calamities and distresses. I cannot dissemble my condition, I have no occasion to publish it, when I address my self to one who knows all things, to whom the secrets of my heart are naked and open; to him, who alone can give effectual relief to my sorrows, and supply my crying necessities. Thy Wisdom knows, when succours are most seasonable, and what is proper for my circumstances, and how very slender and low my stock of virtue is.

Behold I stand before thee, a helpless creature; miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and weak, Rev. iii. imploring thy grace, or at least some small portion of it, to this hungry starving beggar. O let me not be famish'd, but revive this sinking wretch, with some crumbs of heavenly sustenance.

tenance. Let me not perish with cold, but warm me with thy love; let me not fall into the pit, but enlighten my blind eyes with the rays of thy gracious presence. Give me an absolute disrelish of worldly pleasures, and render all here below insipid and bitter to me. Reconcile me to crosses and afflictions, by submission and steady patience; and lessen every thing in this world, whether enjoyment or suffering, by teaching me to despise and forget it. Raise my insensible stupid heart up to heaven, and settle my affections there, that they may no longer wildly range after the trifling objects of flesh and sense. Let me from this time forward taste delight in nothing but thee, nor *spend my money and labour for that which is not bread*; Isa. iv. for thou alone art *Meat indeed, and Drink indeed*; my love and joy, my delight and exceeding great reward, my perfect and only good.

O that, now I am approaching the Throne of Grace, thou would'st command thy Divine Fire to descend from heaven into my soul! O that my sins and corrupt inclinations might be the burnt-offering consumed by it! that it might flame, and burn, and melt me down, purge away all my dross, and, by the efficacy of its powerful heat, refine, and change, and incorporate me with thyself. Let me not, I pray thee, be sent empty away: Let me not return hungry and thirsty from 'so plentiful an entertainment; but work in me mightily, and deal graciously with thy servant, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy Name. I hope to find a wondrous alteration, and cannot think it strange, if I feel my benumbed heart greatly warmed, when I come to that fire, which ever burns without consuming; or, if I find an entire separation of all my worldly and gross affections, when thoroughly heated

heated with that love, whose excellence it is, to purify the heart by its powerful efficacy, and to enlighten blind understandings by the brightness of its flame.

CHAP. XVIII.

An Act of fervent Devotion.

(Disciple.)

Look favourably down, O Lord, and kindly accept thy poor unworthy, but sincere servant, now prostrating himself before thine altar, with a most devout zeal, and all the passionate and tender affections, of which my heart is capable, wishing still, that these pious desires were greater and more worthy of thee, and that I might meet and embrace my Lord, with all that perfection of holiness and eager joy, by which thy best and dearest saints recommended their prayers and praises, and so eminently distinguished themselves in the celebration of this blessed Sacrament. O God! my love and life, my sole and eternal bliss; were but my power proportioned to my will, none of those excellent patterns ever express'd more awful reverence, more ardent devotion, more eager love, more humble gratitude, than at this time I am disposed, and most earnestly wish to express.

I am sensible, O Lord, how far I am from being worthy to receive at thy Hand such plentiful effusions of grace, such singular marks of thy kindness, as enabled them to be so pious and exemplary in all their addresses to thee. But yet my heart, and

all its affections, such as they are, I dedicate to thy service. Whatever a devout mind can conceive or desire, I offer in thy presence, with all possible respect, with a sincerity unfeigned, as if my zeal were much more bright and fervent. I do it without the least reserve ; all I have and am, is entirely thine, most freely consecrated to thy use, my God and Lord, my Almighty Creator, and most merciful Redeemer. Take then a full possession of one, who upon so many accounts is thy own. Enter, and dwell, and reign in me absolute, and for ever. Behold, I open my arms wide, to embrace my Lord and Spouse. I desire at this time to receive thee into my heart, with the same humility and reverence, the same respectful gratitude and love, the same faith and hope, and chaste desire, with which thy holy Mother received thee into her virgin womb ; when she returned that pious answer to the angel, who brought the glad tidings of thy mysterious Incarnation, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word*, Luke i.

And, as thy servant *John Baptist*, that greatest among them that are born of women, *Luke i.* thy messenger sent to prepare thy way before thee, felt the efficacious influence of the Divine Presence, and confess'd it, by leaping in his mother's womb for joy ; as he, ascribing nothing to himself, did afterwards declare himself the *Bridegroom's friend*, whose joy was full in hearing the *Bridegroom's voice* ; *John iii.* so do I desire to offer myself, without any exception, or regard to private interest, and to rejoice and live in thee alone. May all the zeal and raptures, the extasies and heavenly visions of the saints ; may all their virtues and their praises, may every creature in heaven and earth, may all those I have ever prayed for, and all that pray for me,
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contribute to thy glory; and may thy Name be only and ever magnified by all and each of them.

Accept, O Lord, my hearty wishes and desires of praise and thanksgiving, as infinite as thy Majesty; for they are thine of right, and mayest thou be worthily blessed by them. This is, and shall be, my daily hourly prayer. Nor will I think it sufficient barely to wish and endeavour this, singly and in my own person, but I do most seriously invite and conjure all the blessed spirits above, all thy faithful people upon earth, to join in this most just tribute of honour; and, in full consort and perfect harmony, to publish thy praise and glory, in all times and places.

Come in, ye nations and countries, all kindreds, and languages of the world, and bear your parts in singing forth the sweet, the saving, the holy Name of Jesus. Raise your devotions, as high as human nature can go, for you never can go far enough. And you devout disciples of this blessed Master, as oft as you receive this holy Sacrament, be careful that you reverently adore this Mystery of Love. And then be sure with a most fervent faith, and universal charity, to beseech this gracious Saviour, that the effect of his death may be as extensive as the design of it; that he who died for all, may be glorified in the salvation of all. And may those supplications be successful in obtaining mercy, for yourselves, for every sinner, and for me, the chief of sinners in particular.

And, when you return from this precious heavenly feast, full of grace and joy, remember then to look back with tender compassion upon your weaker brethren; and wish, that every contrite and afflicted soul may be admitted to partake of the like comforts, may experience the same wonderful efficacy

cacy from this mysterious Table; and let not me, the least and most unworthy of your brethren, who want them most of any, be denied a part in your charitable Intercessions.

CHAP. XIX.

*Against curious Enquiries concerning this
Sacrament.*

(*Christ.*)

IF thou would'st preserve thy faith incorrupt, and thy devotion free from distraction, content thyself with reverencing and admiring these holy Mysteries; and do not indulge a busy curiosity, in presumptuous and unprofitable enquiries concerning them. For this is the way to damp a godly zeal, and to perplex thy mind with intricate and endless doubts. Remember, *it is the Glory of God to conceal a thing*, Proverb. xxv. 2. and his supereminent Wisdom and Power procures itself just veneration, by doing more than man is able to comprehend. I do not mean by this to exact a blind obedience, but expect, and commend the use of reason in the search of Divine Truth. But upon condition, that it be always tempered with sobriety and modesty, with teachableness, and a due respect to what I myself have revealed in my Word, and what my Church hath faithfully delivered, in her doctrines and exposition upon it.

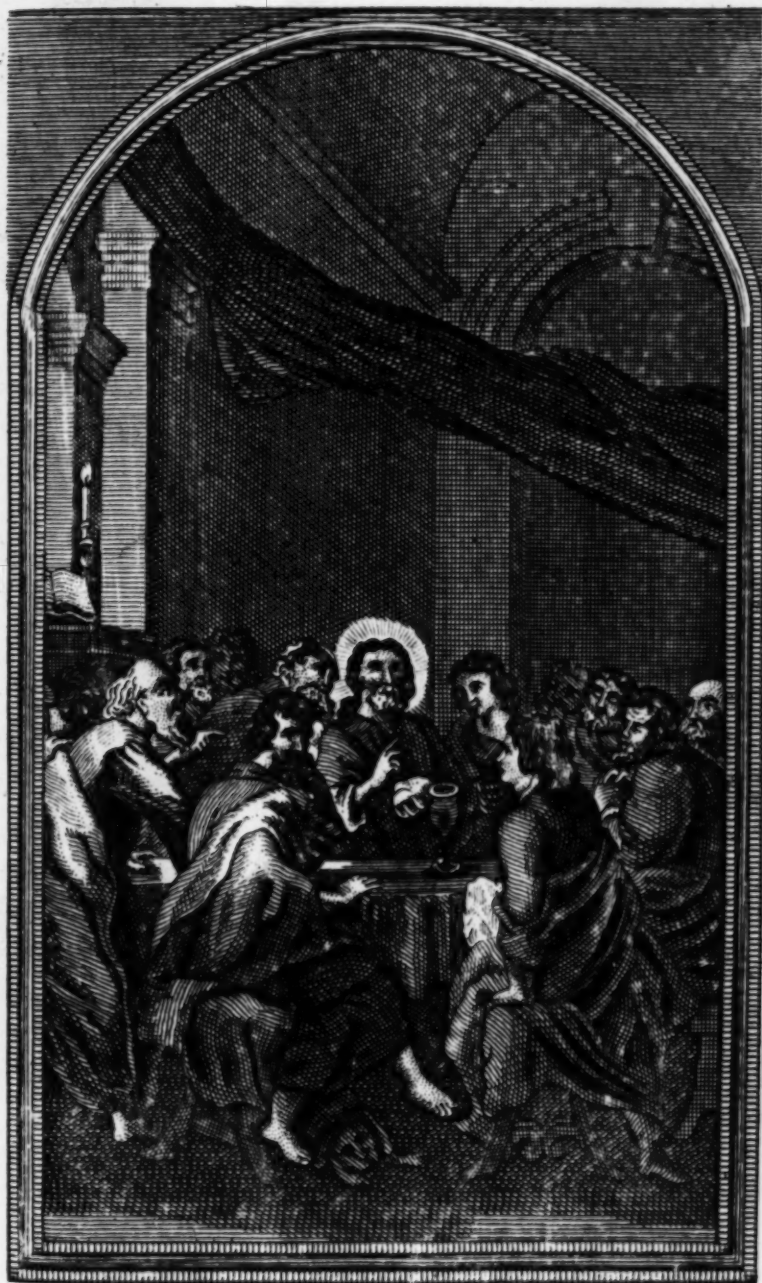
Happy is that meekness and poverty of spirit, which industriously avoids the rugged thorny paths
of

of controversy and captious disputes; and walks in the plain smooth way of duty, and practical religion; which studies God's commands, and labours to understand things within the reach of its capacity, without troubling itself about his doings and decrees. Too many instances there are of daring men, who, by presuming to fathom the deep things of religion, have cavilled and argued themselves out of all religion. These men mistake their business. For the thing required of a Christian, is not penetration, and subtilty of wit, nice distinction, or sublime notions; but victorious faith, and an upright holy life; sobriety, and temperance, and chastity, justice and charity, piety and devotion. How oft is reason puzzled, even in matters relating to creatures inferior to thyself? And will not this reflection controul, and cure, an expectation so extravagant and absurd, as that of being able by the mere strength of reason to give a clear account of things above thee; nay, of perfectly understanding thy great, thy infinite Creator himself? Submit thy reason to revelation, and let humility, and deference to God, recommend thy faith; and then, though thou canst not attain *all* knowledge, yet thou shalt be sure not to want *any* that is necessary and profitable for thee.

Many men are greatly dissatisfied in their minds, with doubts concerning the nature of true faith, and difficulties which arise concerning my presence in the Sacrament. These doubts are not always sinful, nor always from themselves; but frequently owing to the temptations of the devil, and are by him industriously scattered, with wicked artifice, and malicious design. Be not therefore too anxious upon these occasions. Trouble not thyself to argue nicely, nor employ thy thoughts upon the matter; nor
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hold thyself obliged to be able to answer every cavil, which he puts into thy head: But keep close to Scripture, and do thy duty; and the enemy will soon retreat, when he finds thee that thou disregardest his attempts. Think not these inward distractions a sign that thou art forsaken of God. They are rather the contrary, and a certain mark of Grace. God suffers them to exercise thy patience, to try thy constancy, to promote thy spiritual advantage. Wert thou a reprobate, thou wouldst not thus be assaulted; for such the devil is sure of already, and temptations are thrown away upon them. They are the faithful, the sincere, the devout Christians, whom he teizes and torments; for, in so doing, he hopes to enlarge the number of his devotees, and to seduce those who were not his before.

Proceed then resolutely and patiently in thy Christian course, and still frequent the Sacrament with stedfast faith, and humble reverence. Whatever thou findest there that exceeds thy understanding, put it to God's account; and leave him to make it good, tho' thou canst not conceive, how it should be done. He will not deceive thee; but they, who rely upon their own understandings, are sure to deceive themselves. Remember, God hath said, that *he walks and dwells with the humble, and shews his ways to the meek; that he reveal'd himself to babes*, that he opens the eyes of the honest and sincere; but conceals his grace and knowledge from the proud and wise in their own sight. Reason (as is evident from experience) may both deceive and be deceived; for it is but human, and therefore faillible. But faith has God for its foundation, and cannot err; because it depends upon one who



ST. LUKE 22 Verse 17
*Christ institutes the Sacrament of the
Lord's Supper*



who is truth itself, incapable of mistaking, or of imposing upon others.

'Tis therefore highly fit, and in matters of religion absolutely necessary, that these two principles should keep their order, and respective stations; and each contain itself within its proper sphere. Faith (which supposes a revelation received and acknowledged) claims the highest place; and reason ought to keep her distance, to serve and follow after, not to set bounds to, or assume, and encroach, and usurp over the other. For faith and charity are the two pillars, upon which Christianity stands; these are the two governing principles of a good man's opinions and actions. And their authority and influence are, in no one instance, more efficacious, than in this of the blessed Sacrament. God is infinite and eternal, his power unbounded, and incomprehensible. *He does whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and earth, and who can understand his council, or find out all his methods?* If the works of God were such, as human reason could easily penetrate or comprehend, they would lose great part of their glory. Our awe and veneration for their Author would soon abate, if his dealings and dispensations were not above the power of our tongues to express, and the utmost extent of our imaginations to conceive. *O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and confess the wonders that he hath done for the children of men!* Ps. cvii. *For great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!* Rev. xiv. *How unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out!* Rom. xi.

R E F L E X I O N.

THIS holy Ordinance of the Lord's Supper was appointed to commemorate the death and sufferings of our dear Redeemer; to strengthen the believing soul against sin and the temptations of the devil; to corroborate his graces, and build him up in faith, hope, holiness, and every Christian virtue; here he receives help and assistance to enable him, to encounter and vanquish all his spiritual adversaries; here the God of infinite justice reveals himself as a God pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin, and perfectly reconciled to him through the Merits of the Mediator Jesus Christ; here the blessed Jesus discovers himself to the pious soul in all his amiable perfections, as God, assuming the nature of man in order to offer up an adequate acceptable sacrifice to divine justice for the sins of the world; this brings to our remembrance the agonies and bloody sweat, the cruel scourgings and ignominious treatment, the insults and reproaches, and all the direful train of sorrows, pains, and tortures, which our dear Redeemer suffer'd on the cross for our sakes, to save us from the wrath of God, and those everlasting torments that were the just demerits of our sins; here heaven is, in a manner, open'd to our view, and, by faith, we see the glorified *JESUS* now sitting on the right Hand of his Father, mediating and interceding for the acceptance of our persons, prayers, and services, and offering the merits of his own sacrifice as a sufficient atonement to Divine Justice for the breach we had made in the Divine Laws. In this Sacrament the Holy Spirit communicates his graces and sacred influences to the worthy receiver, who, thereby, is raised above the earth.

earth and all sublunary things, to contemplate on things immortal, invifible, eternal; to a myfterious union, and ineffable communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit, the ever-blessed Trinity, Three Persons and One God. A Myftery too deep for the fhort line of human reason to fathom, too facred and divine to admit of captious conteft and difputes; and therefore to be ador'd in filent wonder, contemplation, and the profoundeft humility.

O Blessed *Jefus*, fill me with the Graces of thy Holy Spirit, that when I approach this holy Ordinance, I may have an awful fenfe of thy Prefence in it, of my own unworthinefs to appear before thee, and of thy gracious willingness to hold communion with me. Strengthen my faith, that I may look through thefe perifhable elements of bread and wine, unto thee my crucified Saviour, whole flefh was broken for me, on whom was laid the iniquity of us all. May my hopes of eternal happinefs through the Merits of my Saviour, be enliven'd and invigorated, fo that the things of this world may no longer be in any efteem with me; in this hope may I chearfully bear the crofs of Chrift, the frowns, the fcoffs, and oppreffions of wicked men, fince the happinefs I expect, and fo earneftly long for, is not in this world, nor the gift of men or angels, but thine, my dear Redeemer, which thou haft purchafed with thy moft precious Blood, and is referved for me in heaven, and fhall be put into my poffeffion, fo foon as I have fulfilled thy will here on earth. May I here receive an increafe of charity and benevolent affections for my brethren and fellow Chriftians. May I from hence receive ftrength and affiftance againft the power of fin, the temptations of the devil, the violence and irregularities of my own lufts and paffions, the vanities

nities and delusions of the world; here do thou seal the pardon of my sins, and give me an assurance of thy love ; here may I find supplies of thy Grace, to enable me to persevere in every good work and Christian duty, and wait with patience the time when thou wilt crown all my labours with the joys of thy immediate Presence in thy everlasting Kingdom. *Amen.*

THUS are we brought to the Conclusion of this little Treatise, which was piously intended by the worthy Author, for the Benefit of every sincere Christian. And that we may contribute all in our power to help forward the same religious design, we have added the following collection of Prayers and Meditations, which, tho' we cannot pretend are dictated in the same exalted spirit of devotion; yet as they are sincerely meant to promote the cause of Religion and Piety, we humbly hope they will be kindly receiv'd, us'd, and improv'd, as helps to the devout soul in its addresses to God, for which only they are intended.

Meditations and Prayers

FOR

Persons in SICKNESS or TROUBLE.

MEDITATION I.

*Upon Sickness in general, the Cause and
Design of it.*

I. **C**OME, my soul, and let us reason together, concerning the things that nearly affect us. This body, to which thou art united, flags and droops; the vigor of it is abated, its beauty withered and wasted; the well-knit limbs are become feeble, and with great difficulty sustain their weight, or obey thy commands. They scarce perform any offices well; and when they do, it is with pantings and tremblings, with weariness and faintness. They seem to groan and sink under their burden; and each member, which formerly used to serve thee, with wonderful chearfulness and activity, now calls for succours from abroad, and is no longer able to support itself. This is such a change, as not only is felt, but ought to be well considered too. *Be not thou therefore like to the horse and mule, which have no understanding,* Ps. xxxii. 10. but lose all impressions,

sions, as soon as the sense of the stroke ceases. It is thy privilege and duty both, to reflect and ponder in thy mind; to call back things already past, and anticipate those that are to come; and, as for such as are actually present, to inform thyself of the causes and reasons, the ends and uses of them, as well as with the nature and quality of the things themselves. All these are considerations proper to a reasoning soul, and the present occasion calls upon thee for the exercise of them all. For thou canst not be sick, as becomes a man, and a Christian, without enquiring, whence, and for what cause it is, that thou art so. The first and most necessary step, both toward the patient suffering of the anguish, and the successful application of the remedies, is to learn the true original of our disease.

II. Know then, and be assured, that what the Holy Ghost hath spoken concerning affliction in general, is in an especial manner true concerning this particular branch of it, *It cometh not forth out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* Job. v. 6. Our selves indeed were taken thence, and moulded into man. But this was not the effect of any natural cause: The God of nature, by his Almighty Power, commanded earth and ashes into this beauteous and wonderful structure of human body. And he alone, who created and formed it, commands it back into its native dust again. Every disease and decay, whether it be the effect of accident or time, whether what we commonly call a violent death and shortning our days, or whether we depart this life according to the course of nature, and flower declinings of age; all are but so many shocks, by which this fleshly tabernacle is shaken, or gradually moulders, and, by growing
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more ruinous and uninhabitable, gives the foul warning to seek another dwelling. And these are all disposed, by a most steady and particular providence; and, if traced up to their first original, have a cause as sublime as the body itself hath. Nature indeed proceeds in a smooth and settled course; and so the Hand that directs this engine is far distant, and seldom observed; but even nature itself is God's instrument, tho' the process and the long chain of causes be so intricate, and withal so familiar, and frequently alike, that the events resulting from thence cease to be marvellous in our eyes. A cold, or a surfeit; a weak constitution, or a foul blood; unwholsome diet, and bad hours; neglect of means and carelessness of our health; advice taken too late, or a medicine improper, or out of season; these are what we generally charge our indispositions and our miscarriages upon. And thus far we may say true; but if we carry our thoughts no higher, we stop a great deal too soon. For it is easy to discern a Hand above, that directs and limits all these; that smites the strong, and preserves the tender; slays by the slightest accidents, and recovers from the most desperate: And this, in a manner most surprizing, such as no human art or skill could ever expect, or can in the least account for.

III. If then thou hast convinced thy self, that the Finger of God is in all these things; pursue this thought (my soul) a little farther; and see what a fair and wide scene of knowledge and heavenly wisdom it will soon open to thee. For what is God? Is not He that supreme Being, infinitely powerful, and wise, and just, and good? Is it not He, who made thee, and sustains thee, the same
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who governs and disposes this whole world, and all the creatures in it, after the council of his own will? He, with whom the lives of his servants are exceeding precious? In whose sight the hairs of our head are all numbred? Without whose permission not a sparrow can fall to the ground, and in whose estimation the meanest of those that are made after his own image, are of infinitely more value than many sparrows? Remember, that such is the Author of thy disease: And this single consideration will lead thee to such consequences, such holy and seasonable reflections as cannot, if duly attended, and carefully improved, but work in thee that frame and temper of mind, which best suits thy present circumstances, and must needs dispose thee to reap large and lasting advantages from them. For how canst thou consider his power, and not dread the dire effects of an angry, or not rest secure under the favour and protection of a reconciled God? Or how canst thou contemplate his wisdom, and and not be contented with his chusings for thee? Or how think on his justice, and not be more zealously concerned, to seek a pardon for those sins, which have provoked, and made thee an object of it? O how reflect on his goodness, and not be even thankful under thy sufferings? For what is grievous to flesh and blood, is yet ordained to excellent and heavenly purposes, and it is out of very kindness that thou art thus afflicted: How canst thou think upon his right of creation, without confessing his bounty, in giving and continuing thy Being, and all the comforts of it? Or how, lastly, consider his preference of mankind above all the rest of the creatures here below; without observing the peculiar prerogative, which renders men more valuable, that of a noble and rational soul, which the
others

others want; and fo cherifhing the hope of immortality, whereunto man only, of all here below, is appointed? A hope, which affures us, we fhall not perifh, but only be changed; and, in the midft of languifhing and departing ftruggles, can bear up under, nay, can triumph over agonies and death itfelf. Here then will I fix my thoughts, I will come before the Almighty with a fong, and make my prayer unto the God of my life.

H Y M N.

GOD is the Lord, even God alone: He killeth, and he maketh alive, he woundeth, and he healeth. Deut. xxxii. 39.

Thou, Lord, haft power of life, and death: Thou fcourgeft, and fheweft mercy; thou leadeft to the gates of the grave, and bringeft up again. 1 Sam. ii. 6. Wifd. xvi. 13. Job. xiii. 2.

It is he that holdeth our foul in life; and fuffereth not our feet to fliip. Pf. lxvi. 8.

And again, when we are minifhed and brought low; thro' ficknefs, thro' any affliction or sorrow; Pf. cvii. 39, 40.

Thoe he fuffer us to be evil intreated: yet helpeth he the meek out of mifery, or maketh all his bed in his ficknefs. Pf. xli. 3.

For it is neither herb, nor mollifying plaifter, that reftoreth men to health; but thy Word, O Lord, which healeth all things. Wifd. xvi. 12.

My time is always in thy Hand; unto God the Lord belong the iffues of life and death. Pfal. xxxi. 17. lxviii. 20.

All creatures wait upon thee: when thou openeft thy Hand they are filled with good. Pf. civ. 27.

When thou fendeft forth thy Spirit, they are created;

ed; when thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; when thou takest away their breath, they die, and are turned again to their dust. Ps. civ. 28. 29. 30.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: I will praise my God, while I have my being. Ps. civ. 33.

My meditation of him shall be sweet: and my joy shall be in the Lord. Ps. civ. 34.

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face: my heart said unto me, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Ps. xxvii. 8.

O hide not thou thy face from me: nor cast away thy servant in displeasure. Ps. xxvii. 9.

Thou hast been my Helper: leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. Ps. xxvii. 10.

Some put their trust in strength of nature; and some in medicines: but I will remember the Name of the Lord our God. Ps. xx. 7.

O put not your trust (in Physicians, nor) in any child of man: for there is no help in them. Ps. cxlvi. 2.

But blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help: and whose hope is in the Lord his God. Psal. cxlvi. 4.

Save, Lord, and hear me, O King of Heaven, when I call upon thee. Ps. xx. 9.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, &c.

As it was in the beginning, &c.

A P R A Y E R.

O Almighty God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, whose never failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth: I desire, with the profoundest humility and reverence, to prostrate both soul and body before thee, beseeching thee to give me Grace, that I may behold
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and admire thy works, in all thy diſpenſations towards myſelf and all mankind. I acknowledge it is of thy bounty, that I ever had a being; and adore thy mercy and long-ſuffering, for preſerving me thus long in the Land of the Living. My many days and years of health and comfort were of thy pure gift; and the recoveries from former ſickneſſes, as well as the prevention of thoſe dangers and diſeaſes I never felt, are owing to thee alone. Man doth not live by bread and care, nor is relieved by medicines only, but by the Word and Bleſſing, which proceedeth out of the Mouth of God. Grant me, I entreat thee, a ſtrong and due ſenſe of my entire dependance upon thee, and grace to improve under, and behave myſelf in conformity to, that perſuaſion. That whether the means uſed for my eaſe and relief ſucceed, I may aſcribe all the glory and thanks to thee alone: O whether thou thinkeſt fit to deny them their intended effects, I may humble myſelf under thy mighty Hand, and remember that thou, Lord, haſt done it. Inſpire me, I beſeech thee, with that true and heavenly Wiſdom, which may inſtruct me to diſcern aright the reaſons, and enable me to answer the ends of this correction, and all other thy dealings with me. That I may hear the rod, and who hath appointed it; and, in all conditions, ſubmit myſelf entirely to thy good pleaſure, and glorify God in the day of viſitation. So ſhall this weakneſs of my body tend to the ſtrengthening of my virtues, and the health of my ſoul; through the Merits of him who redeemed them both at the price of his own moſt precious Blood; even thy Son and my ever Bleſſed Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, *Amen.*

MEDITATION II.

*Of the Power of God, and the Dread of his Anger,
and Trust in his Protection.*

I. **W**Hich way soever we turn our eyes, innumerable objects meet us, which all manifest and preach to us the Almighty Power of God. The glorious fabrick of the universe, and every thing contained therein, nay even the meanest, and, in human esteem, the most contemptible creature, proclaims aloud the Omnipotence of its Maker. And the good order, in which these are contained, does as much magnify his preserving, as their existence does his creating Power. But man needs not look abroad; he may find in himself ten thousand arguments to demonstrate this to himself. The curious structure of his Body, the excellencies of its Divine Inhabitant, the Soul, and the marvellous amazing union, and mutual correspondence of both these, could be the workmanship of nothing less than Omnipotence. This mixture of spirit and matter, of perishing and immortal; the sagacity of the one to influence and govern, the readiness of the other to obey, and be acted upon; the sprightliness and vigor, or else the heaviness and disorder, and reciprocal disabilities, which each of these convey to the other, are most certainly the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our eyes. Alas! how should man subsist one moment, even in the state of his greatest perfection, did not this great artificer watch over his own work, and constantly sustain it; did not he check and moderate that conflict, which the warring elements of our body are
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continually engaging in? But especially, now that the corruption of our nature, and the transgression of our first parent, hath brought death and diseases upon us; there needs no fresh infliction. For, if God should withdraw his restraining Hand, the enemy is always ready to devour us, and we carry the seeds of torment and ruin about our own persons. And God hath so decreed, that every man shall once fall by the stroke of death. A Decree, which, in our greatest strength, in the very bloom and beauty of youth, contrary to our own expectations, or the fears of our tenderest friends, he sometimes executes: To teach us, that our being is wholly precarious, that we have nothing stable here, no title even to life itself; but are all concluded by a sentence already pass'd. For all our days are no other than a reprieve; the prolonging whereof is an act of mere mercy, as the cutting it short is free from the least shadow of injustice. God then cannot want means and opportunities for this. All nature is his; the malice of wicked men, the spight of our foes, the mistaken kindness of our friends, the errors of our physicians, and the misapplication of their medicines, are all directed and over-ruled to this end. The humours of our bodies, the temper of the air, and every element indeed when he gives the word, turn executioners; or, in truth, if he but please to permit, the thing will do it self. He burns us up by fevers, or drowns us in dropsies; strikes us dead in a moment by apoplexies, buries us alive by palsies, or wastes us, by slow and imperceptible degrees, with lingering consumptions. Thus, O my soul, thou seest how easily God can do these things, by a thousand instances of thy friends and acquaintance gone before thee, and
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by thy own yet more sensible experience, in this worn and languishing body of thine. Thou feelest now, that no flesh is able to stand before God, and how quickly we are blasted by the breath of his displeasure. That, to him alone belongs power and strength, and to poor mortal man, nothing but wretchedness, and weakness, and vanity.

II. Surely (my soul,) had these impressions been fresh and strong upon me heretofore, they would have checkt my wild career in sin, and prevented many grievous and bold transgressions, which I have reason to fear, have provoked the Divine Majesty, to cast me upon this bed of languishing. For do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? Alas! my own condition hath taught me, how presumptuous and fool-hardy it is, not only to fight against God, but not to fear and stand in perpetual awe of him: How fatal it is to trifle with this consuming fire: And I cannot but wish from the bottom of my soul, that I had better consider'd this point long ago. For he is a terrible and a mighty God; and, when he enters into controversy with mankind, no flesh can abide it. At least, my soul, let us make that good use of this reflection now, to be unfeignedly sorry for what is past; and more cautious and observant for the time to come. The flower is withered indeed, and hangs its feeble head; but it is not quite cut down. O let us yet humble our selves in his fear, and consider, what a yet more dreadful vengeance God hath in store, for hardened and unrepenting sinners. If the decays and pains of the body alone are so grievous, how shall we bear the loss of body and soul both? How shall we dwell with everlasting burnings? If the rod of God, these comparatively light punishments, re
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present to us the terrors of his angry justice; who can bear the approach of that dreadful day, when he shall come in thunder and flames, to make a final end of this whole world, and deliver incorrigible finners over to irrecoverable destruction? An eternity of torments! Jesus defend us! Who can entertain even the most distant thought of it, without horror and astonishment? Fall down then, my soul, and humble thyself under the mighty Hand of God; that thou may'st not perish with this frail body. Lose no time in making thy peace, but work with all thy might; especially now, that the day of life seems to decline, and the night comes on, wherein no man can work.

III. For, remember, O my soul, for thy encouragement, that, if thou abound in the Work of the Lord, thy labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. *1 Cor. xx. 58.* He is no less mighty to save than to destroy; with him nothing is impossible; and, if he will, he can even yet raise this feeble body, and restore it to perfect health and soundness. Nay, he will certainly do it, if that be best for me; and if it be not, he will do yet more. For, there will come a day, in which this vile earthly part shall again revive; and, if it crumble into dust, and scatter in the mean while; tho' it pass thro' infinite different forms, yet will he pursue this body through all its changes, collect its dispersed particles, command the little heaps of dust to awake, and translate it into a glorious and a spiritual body. A body fit for a state of incorruption, and the inheritance of that Kingdom, where this flesh and blood, which we now so falsely, so extravagantly value, is not worthy to enter. I will therefore

fore confirm myself in the power and promises of my God; and, with holy *Job*, *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* *Job.* xiii. 15. For, even then I will lay me down, in hope of a resurrection to eternal life; and commit my body like seed, to the ground; not to perish, but to be improved, by corrupting there. For thou, O God, art unchangeable, and thy promises irrevocable; and promised thou hast, that our vile body shall be fashion'd like unto Christ's glorious Body, according to the mighty working, whereby thou art able to subdue all things to thyself.

EJACULATIONS.

IN thee, therefore, O Lord, will I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion, but deliver me in thy righteousness, and save me. *Pf.* lxxi.

Be thou my strong-hold; whereunto I may alway resort: thou hast promised to help me, for thou art my house of defence, and my castle.

Deliver me, O my God, from the adversary's hand: Preserve me from the hunter of souls.

He layeth snares, and is mighty to destroy: but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high is mightier.

Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for: thou hast been my hope even from my youth.

Through thee have I been holden up ever since I was born: Thou art he that took me out of my mother's womb, my praise shall be always of thee.

O cast me not away in the time of any distress: forsake me not, when my strength faileth me.

Let them be confounded and perish that are against my soul: Let the wicked spirits be cover'd with shame and dishonour, that seek to do me evil.

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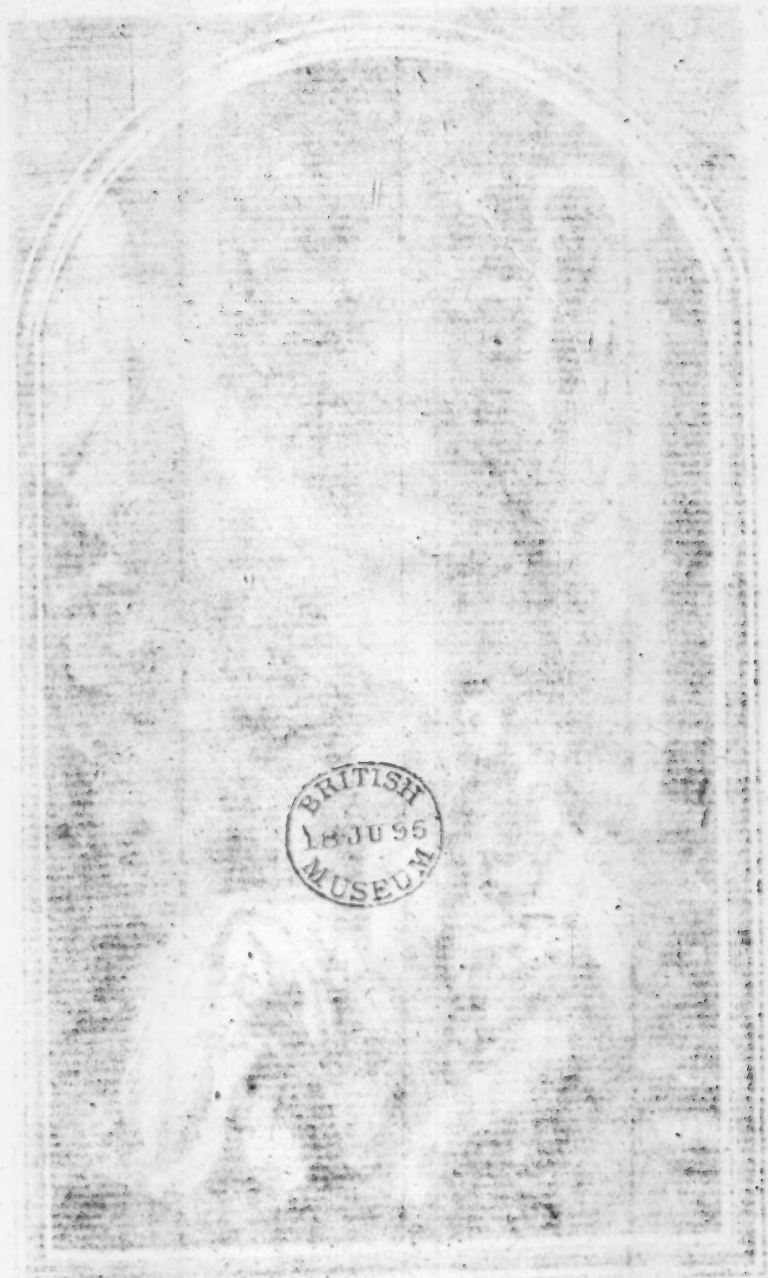
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S^t MATTHEW 2 Verse 9.
*the Wise Men offer to Christ Gold Frank-
-incense & Myrrh.*

As for me, I will patiently tarry the Lord's leisure: and will put my trust in the Lord. Ps. xxvii. 16.

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the last day upon the earth. Job. xix. 25.

And tho' after my skin worms destroy this body; yet in my flesh shall I see God, verse 26.

Whom I shall see for my self: and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, verse 27.

For he is the resurrection and the life: and whosoever believeth in him, tho' he die, yet shall he live again. Job xi. 25.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

As it was in the beginning, &c.

A P R A Y E R.

O Most glorious Lord God, terrible art thou in thy judgments, and wonderful in all thy dealings towards the children of men; possess my soul, I beseech thee, with awful and becoming apprehensions of thy Majesty. Give me a serious sense and sorrow, for ever having hardned my heart against thy fear, and provoked that vengeance, which is able to consume me in a moment. Lord, convince me whom I ought to dread, and let me never, for the gratifying any sinful inclination, forget any more the Lord my Maker, and incur the displeasure of him, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell. And, as I implore thy Grace, that this consideration of thy Power may be an effectual check to all my unruly appetites; so, I beseech thee, let it be my support and confidence in

all dangers and distresses. That, forsaking the broken reeds of all worldly succours, I may put my whole trust in thy mercy; and, evermore serving thee in holiness and pureness of living, may even in death itself be more than conqueror. Even in that joyful day, when all enemies shall be destroyed; when thy children shall come forth from the dark prisons of the grave, and shine like suns in the kingdom of thee their Father. Grant this, thou rock of my soul, for thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake.

MEDITATION III.

Of the Justice of God; and the Sorrow of a penitent Sinner.

I. **G**OD is a Being infinitely perfect and good; the Supreme, the original Good; the Author and Maker of all things; and cannot therefore be supposed, either to hate or despise what he himself hath made, or to have given being to any thing, with a design to render it miserable. His Providence and Power, which were the subjects of the two former Meditations, are, in their own nature and original intention, calculated for the benefit and security of his creatures. And, if at any time they become the instruments or dispensers of grief and pain; this is an effect purely accidental; an operation so foreign, that it is even extorted from them, and wholly resulting from some other cause. And this is the case of mankind; once favour'd above all their fellow-creatures, and safe under the shelter

shelter and smiles of an Almighty Protector: But, by their own fault, deprived of this defence, left naked and exposed to mischiefs and sufferings; and not only disarmed of their surest guard, but in perpetual hazard of being destroy'd by that very Hand which was formerly their Friend and Defender. O wretched consequences of sin! that did not only render our first parents and all their posterity liable to bodily death, and all the diseases and pains that lead to it; but left a fatal averfeness to all good, and a strong propension in us to all manner of evil. By indulging whereof we add our own actual guilt, to that which our sinful parents had derived down to us; and by iniquities without number, by wilful, repeated, habitual, and bold transgressions, do confirm and aggravate this sentence of death, and arm the justice of God against ourselves.

II. Marvel not then, if thou see so many dreadful spectacles of affliction in the world; nor murmur, when thou thyself shouldest happen to be one of that miserable number, and sore laden with the burthen of adversity. But remember, that God is righteous, and both thou and these people are wicked; that he is holy and just, as well as good, and, tho' he do not willingly grieve the children of men, yet their iniquities put a sort of violence upon him, which he cannot resist. They quite weary him out, and render it impossible, (that is, inconsistent with his other attributes and the perfection of his nature) to let such men go always unpunished. Nay, even in those infinitely more dreadful torments in a future state, his perfections are concerned to vindicate themselves; for tho' these be dreadful, beyond what we are able to express or conceive, yet are they just. And, at the same time

that we may be apt to question, whether so great severity be consistent with the character of our Judge, we prove the Wisdom of our Lawgiver; and, that even eternal pains were necessary, since even all this will not contain us in our duty, and effectually restrain us from sinning.

III. And this, O my soul, is thy case. These everlasting plagues are the equitable wages of thy wickedness. For do thou descend into thyself; (as it becomes thee to do, now more especially (and there take an exact survey of thy miseries and frailties; thy raging passions, and ungovern'd appetites: Ask thyself, what abuses and misemployments of health thou hast been guilty of. Whether thou have not too much neglected and forgot God and heaven, and been too full of care and fondness for this present world; whether thou have not neglected his worship and Sacrament, and disregarded his word, or whether these have not been frequented formally and coldly. Examine the heaviness of thy affections, the wandrings and negligence of thy mind, in publick and private devotions. [*Here it may be convenient to instance in any other particulars against our duty to God.*] Consider if thou art not guilty of the violation of justice and charity to thy neighbour, whether thou hast fully discharged the offices of the several capacities and relations God hath placed thee in; [*A husband or wife, a master or mistress, a son or daughter, a magistrate, a subject, a parent, a brother or sister, and the like.*] If thou art not conscious of gross and palpable injustice in thy dealings, yet hast thou done wrong to no man's soul, by ill advice, or ill example? Nor injustice to the bodies of any, by malice or contempt, by ill treatment, severe usage, want of compassion
and

and care for their infirmities? What reputations haft thou injured by fcandal and wrong cenfure; by falfe and uncharitable judgments; by bufy meddling with matters that concern thee not; by officioufly fpreading, or too haftily believing ill reports; by encouraging, repeating, and being pleafed with detracting or reproachful reflections; or if by none of thefe, yet at leaft by forbearing to reprove, or to difcountenance a flandering tongue, and to deliver the innocent from its fecret ftabs? [*Here again be particular in any other fins you have been guilty of againft your Neighbour.*] Turn thy eyes inward once more; and behold the breaches of that duty thou oweft to thyfelf; the intemperance and irregularity of thy defires; the murmurings and difcontents; the infirmities indulged, the paffions unſubdued, the negligence in thy greateft concern; the love of unlawful, and the abuſe of lawful diverfions and delights. Thefe are things ſo incident to our ſtate, that no man's conſcience can ſpeak peace to him in them all; and happy art thou in theſe, where thine condemns thee not. But know withal, that God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things; he keeps an exact account of thy lurking corruptions, and ſecret faults; the unobſerved miſdemaneors of thy life, that have been long ſince forgotten. The catalogue whereof, could they be ſet before thee, would give a diſmal proſpect full of horror and confuſion, and intolerable amazement. So that thou muſt needs acknowledge thyſelf a maſs of filth and miſery; a wretch, that, if God ſhould enter into judgment with thee, haft reaſon to expect nothing better than indignation and fury; to be ſet up as a mark of his vengeance, and, by ſome ſwift exemplary deſtruction,

tion, swept violently away into the hottest flames of hell.

IV. Thus much I am sadly sensible of, and do stand condemned out of my own mouth. And thus far the circumstances of all mankind are alike, that if God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, the very best of us all could not abide it. But, blessed be God, though matters are in a very deplorable condition, they are not quite desperate; for there is mercy with him, and his justice is satisfied. The price and purchase of our souls is paid; our forfeit lives are ransomed and redeemed; our ransom in value exceeds the whole world; even his own beloved and only begotten Son; who spared not his own life, but willingly poured out his soul to the death; and is thereby become a sacrifice and atonement for the sins of wretched mortals. He hath published glad tidings of reconciliation and repentance, of pardon and peace. He came to save sinners, even the chief of sinners. Our God desires not the death of any; provided they believe, and sincerely obey him: Not according to the standard of the sanctuary, which requires unfinning perfection; but after the standard of the New Covenant, which allows for human frailties, accepts sorrow for the past, amendment for the time to come, a fervent love of God, and honest endeavours to serve him. This is a saying worthy to be accepted indeed; this is the comfort and confidence of poor returning sinners. And, while I can see by faith the penalty of eternal damnation released, by virtue of the Blood of this Lamb of God, slain, to take away the sins of the world, I will patiently submit to the temporal punishments, which God, justly provoked, has inflicted upon me; and thankfully accept the
sick-

sicknefses and afflictions of this present life, as so many warnings and calls to repentance.

V. And sure (my soul) we shall take care to make this good use of them. For these are the corrections of the Lord; and if, after all that is come upon me for my evil deeds, and for my great trespasses, seeing that thou, my God, hast punished me less than my iniquities deserve; if I should again break thy Commandments, thou would'st certainly be angry, till thou had'st utterly consumed me; and torment me so much the more, for neglecting so great a salvation. *Ezra ix. 13.* I take therefore this chastisement with all possible submission; and do with unfeigned sorrow confess my manifold offences. I implore thy mercy, who art justly angry with me; and, since in the midst of life we are in death, I cry earnestly to thee for succour, and beg, that howsoever thou thinkest fit to dispose of this corruptible body, thou would'st look graciously upon me in thy dear Son, and not deliver my poor soul into the bitter pains of eternal death; but pity and save me for CHRIST JESUS his sake. *Amen.*

Here may be repeated the, xxxviii. and li. Psalms.

Then the Confession in the Communion-service.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Maker of all things, &c.

Or else the three Prayers at the End of the Communion.

O Lord, we beseech thee, &c.

O most mighty God, &c.

Turn thou me, O good Lord, &c.

After either of which, say as follows,

A PRAY-

A P R A Y E R.

(Visitation of the Sick.)

O Most merciful God, who according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, dost so blot out the sins of those who truly repent, that thou remembrest them no more; Grant me, I beseech thee, true repentance and thy Holy Spirit; and then open thine Eye of Mercy upon my languishing condition, and give me comfort of pardon and forgiveness. Renew in me, most loving Father, whatsoever hath been decayed by fraud and malice of the devil, or by my own carnal will and frailness. Preserve and continue me in the unity of thy Church: Guard me by thy Power from all the assaults of the tempter, and suffer him not to take advantage of my weakness. Consider, I beseech thee, my contrition, accept my tears, hear my own prayers, and those of others on my behalf, and assuage my pains, as shall seem to thee most expedient for me. In thy Mercy, O Lord, I put my full trust, in thy mercy alone; and in the Merits and sufferings of my crucified Saviour. Impute not, O Lord, unto me my former sins, but strengthen me with thy blessed Spirit; and whenever it shall be thy good pleasure to take me hence, take me unto thy favour, thro' the Merits of thy dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

MEDITATION IV.

Of the Divine Wisdom and Goodnefs.

I. **W**ERE there no other confideration to compose the mind, but that alone of our sufferings being juſt, this ſhould in reaſon perſuade meekneſs, and patience, and contentedneſs under them. For, as the Prophet urges very well; *Wherefore doth a mortal man complain; even a man for the puniſhment of his ſin?* Lam. ii. The thief upon the croſs, notwithstanding all the hardning of his former profligate life, yet pacified himſelf under his pains, and reproved his reviling companion, with this reflection, that they were under the *condemnation juſtly, and received but the due reward of their evil deeds*, Luke xxiii, 41. But we have more noble conſiderations, to quiet our repining thoughts, and ſilence all complaints; when the ſharpeſs of an affliction, or the ſufferings of a ſick-bed, would provoke us to impatience. Our ſins have been numerous and great enough to make God our enemy, and do call but too loud for the ſevereſt rigors of his vengeance; yet are not thoſe adverſities the wounds and bruises of an enemy, but the chaſtiſement of a Father. One, that ſmites us indeed, but it is in righteouſneſs and friendſhip; and only with a deſign to correct and reform us. Obſerve what heavenly comforts the Apoſtle hath left behind, and how God himſelf hath explained the nature and intent of his own diſpenſations. *My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chaſten.*

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chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you, as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and life? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby. Heb. xii.

II. What now can more illustrate the Wisdom of Providence, than the converting our most bitter calamities into occasions of promoting our virtue and happiness? And which of all our calamities is more likely to contribute to our reformation, than those of sickness and pain? For these, by touching our own persons, are most sensible and grievous to be borne; and, by punishing the body, for the sake and indulgence of which, most, if not all, our wickednesses are committed, they meet with the very cause, and go to the root of the disease, and so are best fitted to effectuate the cure. Our Physician of souls is both skilful and kind; he will not give us over out of a cruel indulgence to our own ease. Our God, who stiles himself our Father, answers his character, and gives seasonable correction to prevent our utter ruin. But in all this there is the prudence of the Physician mixt with the tenderness of the Parent. The one would not prescribe the bitter cup, unless he knew it necessary and best for us; and, if our circumstances call for correction,

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it is with gentleness and reluctance, with pain and yearning of bowels, that the other scourges.

III. Do thou therefore, O my soul, seriously consider, who it is that chuses for thee, and learn to resign thyself to his disposals; for they are the appointments of one, who is wiser than thou, and who loves thee better than the tenderest mother could. Do thou likewise meditate, why he chuses for thee, and learn to improve under the seeming harshness of such dispensations. Take gladly the wholesome Physick, and secure a good operation to thyself. Indulge no desires or wishes of thy own, but, with a constant reserve to the good pleasure of God, think, and be assured, that what he does is best. Best in itself, and best for thee too, if thy own fault hinders it not. Alas! we know not what to pray for as we ought, and should therefore beg nothing peremptorily, but that God would do what he sees most expedient. Ask therefore, my soul, that he would make thee an instrument of his own glory; that he would support thee in these severe tryals, and not suffer thee to be tempted above that thou art able; that he would order all things to work together for thy good; and for the rest, take thy Saviour for thy pattern, and as oft as thou prayest, that the cup may pass from thee, be sure forget not to add, from the very bottom of thy soul, *Nevertheless*, O Father, not my will, but thine be done.

IV. And, to render the bitter cup thou art now drinking as little unpalatable as may be, forget not also to strengthen thyself, with the comforts even of thy weakest condition. Seriously observe, how gracious the Lord is; how he hath not only spared,

when thou hast deserved punishment, but in the very midst of his wrath hath remember'd mercy. If thy pains be not constant, thank him for those intervals of ease and refreshment: If they be not acute and extreme, thank him for the abatement and moderation of them. If thou canst recruit and refresh thy feeble spirits with sleep, thank him for closing up thy eyes, in gentle reviving slumbers; if he hold thy eyes waking, thank him for the opportunities he gives thee of meditating and praying to him in the night season. Yea, thank him especially for preserving to thee thy understanding and thy senses; and, that he hath given thee the power and the grace to make a good and holy use of these; that the length of thy sickness hath been so much a larger opportunity of preparing for that momentous change, which, not this languishing body of thine only, but also all those thou leavest behind in full health and beauty, and vigor, must shortly undergo. If thou endurest much; consider, this is a good method of weaning thy affections from the world, and making thee thirst and pant more earnestly after the lasting joys of a better place. If the tedious lingering distemper assault, and almost tire out thy patience, think how much rather this is to be chosen, than the raging phrenzies of a fever, or the sudden stroke of an apoplexy. Reflect upon the condition of those miserable wretches, who are snatched out of the world, it may be, in an act of damning sin; even in an instant; without so much as the power, or the leisure, to seek pardon or peace, to commit their souls to God, or so much as once implore his mercy at the last gasp. O! what would they have given, how much more would they gladly have suffered to purchase this long warning, these slow and solemn approaches of death, the happy advantages thou

thou now enjoyeſt of trimming thy lamp, and putting thy ſoul in readineſs to meet the bridegroom at his coming? For, tho' we ought indeed to expect him every hour, even in our moſt confirmed health; yet well is it for that ſervant, who receives expreſs notice of his maſter's approach, and is careful ſo to provide for it, as in zealous prayers, and eager wiſhes to go out and meet him; and, having on the wedding garment, waits only for his laſt call, to enter with him to the marriage-feaſt.

E J A C U L A T I O N S.

WH^Y art thou ſo heavy, O my ſoul, why art thou ſo diſquieted within me? Still put thy truſt in God, for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance, and my God, *Pſal. xliii. 5, 6.*

The Lord hath chaſtened and corrected me; but he hath not given me over unto deſtruction, Pſalm xv. 18.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right: and that thou of very faithfulneſs haſt cauſed me to be troubled, Pſ. cxix. 75.

It is of the Lord's mercies, that I was not long ago conſumed: becauſe his compaſſions fail not, Lament. iii. 22.

The Lord is my portion, ſaith my ſoul, therefore will I hope in him. verſe 24.

It is good for a man that he ſhould conſtantly hope, and quietly wait for the ſalvation of the Lord: for the Lord will not caſt off for ever. verſ. 26.

But tho' he cauſe grief, yet will he have compaſſion, according to the multitude of his mercies, verſe 31, 32. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own

own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him. Ps. ciii. 13.

In the multitude of the sorrows which I have in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul. Ps. xciv. 19.

For, I know, that with thee there is mercy: and with my God is plenteous redemption. Ps. cxxx. 7.

O remember not my old sins, but have mercy upon me, and that soon, for I am come to great misery. Ps. lxxix. 8.

Heal my soul, which hath sinned against thee: Ps. xli. 4. and then let the Lord do what seemeth him good. 1 Sam. iii. 18.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, &c.
As it was in the beginning, &c.

A P R A Y E R.

HEAR me, Almighty and most merciful God and Saviour, extend thy accustomed goodness to me thy poor servant, who am now cast upon this bed of languishing, and griev'd with sickness. Sanctify, I entreat thee, this thy fatherly correction to me, and grant that I may receive it with all the patience and submission that becomes a dutiful child. I desire to acknowledge and adore thy divine Wisdom and goodness, in every dispensation of Providence towards me; and only pray, that thou wouldest keep me safe under all, and then use what methods thou plearest, of bringing me to thy self. Manifest thy strength in my weakness. Make even my feeble condition an instrument of thy glory; and the more my outward man decayeth, strengthen me, I beseech thee, so much the more continually,
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with constant fupply of thy grace and Holy Spirit in the inner man. Let the fenfe of my weaknefs add ftrength to my faith, and ferioufnefs to my repentance. That if it be thy good pleafure to reftore me to thy former health, I may lead the refidue of my life in thy fear, and to thy glory; or elfe grant me fo to improve thy vifitation, that, after this painful life is ended, I may enjoy with thee life everlafting. For this, O Lord, is the chief, the moft earneft defire of my foul; that whatever I live, I may live unto the Lord; or whether I die, I may die unto the Lord; fo that living and dying I may be thine, through JESUS CHRIST, my dear and only Saviour. *Amen.*

MEDITATION V.

Upon Recovery from Sicknefs.

I. IF dangers and diftreffes awaken our confideration, the deliverance from them ought not furely to pafs unobferved. The judgments of God extort complaints from us; and fhall his mercies be received in filence? When he afflicts and wounds, we feek him early; and fhall we forget him, when he refrefhes and heals us? That fure were the higheft ingratitude, moft unworthy, moft reproachful. The rather fo, becaufe we ourfelves are able to give a very plain and rational account, how it comes to pafs that we receive evil at the Hand of God; but the good he vouchsafes us, furnifhes juft matter no lefs of wonder, than of thankfulness. Death is the punifhment of fin; the difeafes and decays of our bodies

dies are so many degrees of, and advances toward that death: And our consciences can find no difficulty in justifying God for inflicting these painful dispensations upon us. For none of us can descend into his own breast, without discovering infinite personal offences, which might provoke God to take this forfeit life, and to cut us off in the midst of our days. But, when he forbears to do so, when he checks his wrath, and suspends the execution of that fatal sentence gone out against us; we can discern no reason for this in ourselves; but must resolve it all into the sole, the undeserved goodness of our merciful and long-suffering Lord.

And such, my soul, is now exactly thy case. Thou wert hastening apace to the regions of the dead, and in hourly expectation that thou should'st be depriv'd of the residue of thy years. But when thou wast almost cut off with pining sickness, and thine eyes even failed with looking upward; when thou reckoned'st each night and morning, that there would be *an end of thee* upon earth; *Isa. xxxviii. 12, 13.* then did the Lord stand by thee and *save thee*, even because *he had a favour unto thee.* *Psal. xviii. 19.*

II. Now, tho' this be the condition common to all mankind, that we contribute no part to the efficient or meritorious cause of such goodness; yet in the final cause we may and must bear a very considerable part. It deserves our most serious reflection that we could not give the blessing to ourselves; that we could not deserve that Almighty God should give it us, but it will stand us instead to take care, that such grace be not bestowed in vain. In one respect indeed, and strictly speaking, neither this, or any other of the dispensations of Providence, can possibly

bly be in vain. For some effect they will necessarily have, even with regard to us. But, if they do not answer the good purposes, for which they were design'd, better were it for us, that we had never received them at all. The lengthning out our days, if we do not amend our lives, is but the ministring fresh and larger opportunities of adding yet more to our sins here, and to our punishment hereafter. And happier had it been, to have been swept away with a swift destruction, than to be deliver'd from our fears, and live such a life afterwards as is certain to render us more miserable in the end. For, every mercy, every escape must be accounted for; and these which are entertained unthankfully, will at length prove curses, instead of blessings to us. It therefore behoves thee, my soul, very seriously to consider, wherein true thankfulness consists, and in what instances it ought to be express'd.

III. When men do any signal acts of kindness to each other, the receiver thinks himself under an obligation to pay them back again, in some equivalent service or benefit. This is what men cannot be excused from, provided fit opportunities offer, and their circumstances enable them to do it. But when the power of doing thus is wanting, we are sensible, that so much as falls short in procuring a friend's real advantage, ought to be made up in all becoming testimonies of respect. In such a readiness of mind as plainly shews, that the party does not however want the will and sincere desire, of returning such favours in kind, and to the full.

Now the same rule of equity must needs hold toward our great Benefactor in heaven. He is indeed so great, that his all-sufficiency can neither need, nor receive any addition. And we are so very poor

and impotent, that it were the extremest vanity and madness, to suppose ourselves capable of adding to him. The utmost we can do is to behave ourselves in such a manner, that he, and all the world, may plainly perceive us duly sensible of his bounty. Now this can be demonstrated only by our constant and zealous care, to please and honour him, by taking pleasure in the obedience he hath enjoined us, and testifying, by our practise, that we esteem the service of so bountiful a Master, our most reasonable duty, and perfect freedom. Altho' therefore our lips ought to set forth the praises of the Lord, and his kindness should ever be in our mouths; yet are those praises never set forth effectually, yet is that kindness never acknowledged in a manner as it ought, except our lives and every action publish it. The professions of gratitude are of no consideration in any case, farther than they express the inward sentiments of the heart. That heart cannot be truly grateful, which does not labour, and study, by all proper means, to approve itself to the person to whom it is a debtor. And how this is to be done to Almighty God, we are informed by his own Word; by declaring, that, the man who truly *honours him* will *order his conversation aright*; Psal. l. 23. that they who *love him* will give testimony of their affection, by *keeping his Commandments*; John xiv. 15. that *the goodness and forbearance of God* does (both in its natural and designed tendency) *lead to repentance*; Rom. ii. 4. that it even *constrains men to live no longer to themselves, but to him who hath done so great things for them*. 2 Cor. v. 15.

IV. These are reflections so plain and self-evident, so very obvious and natural to every man, that there are seldom any remarkable calamities undergone,
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or deliverances obtained, without exciting them in our minds. Few wretches are so hardened in wickedness, few so abandoned, and lost to all sense of God and goodness; but in the seasons of sickness and danger, they see their past follies with displeasure, and are made sensible of the reasonableness of forsaking them. But this is the general unhappiness, this the great fault of most men, that such remorse quickly wears off, and their good intentions soon cool again. The smart of the rod ceases, and the success of the correction is lost with it. The health of the body grows more confirmed, and the conscience hardens in proportion as the constitution is strengthened. And thus the man returns to his old vanities and vices, with the same unconcernedness as before.

But, O my soul, let it not be thus with me. No. Let me look back with a sedate seriousness, upon the vows I made, when I was in trouble; and consider, that these were not to be transient and occasional resolutions; that they were intended for lasting obligations, and cannot be sincerely discharged, unless they influence the remainder of that life, which thou hast so graciously restored to me. I ought to consider my self, as one raised from the dead, and favoured with life a second time; that from henceforth I might employ and use the gift to the honour of the Giver, who hath thus, as it were, created me afresh. He saw it better, upon my request, to continue me longer in this state of trial; and ought to be the more strictly careful, that every day added to my past years may prove a higher advance in piety and virtue; that none of my holy purposes languish or die, as too many have formerly done; that this late approach to the grave may perpetually warn me of my mortality; and that, whenever death and

judgment shall actually overtake me, (as overtake me they most undoubtedly will) I may not be found less provided to meet my Lord, than this last summons left me.

For, can I reflect upon my late weakness, and harbour an imagination so vain, as that this body, in its greatest vigor, may promise itself an everlasting continuance? Can I observe this youth of mine renewed as the eagle's, and assign it to any other cause, than the almighty power and infinite goodness of him, who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive, according to the council of his own will? Can I acknowledge my present recovery owing entirely to that power and goodness, and not discover the indispensable engagements, which lie upon me, to make some suitable return? And what return is possible, what so proper, so acceptable as that of a grateful heart; a diligent improvement of this mercy; life, in every part of it, entirely dedicated to him, who hath strengthened his title now yet more, and made it upon so many accounts his own?

V. I will therefore be frequently acting over again those solemn exercises of repentance, performed in the bitterness of my soul; and by the repetition shew, that the good thoughts I entertained, continue to be the calm and continued sense of my more composed mind. I will strictly examine, what fault is committed, what duties neglected, or but negligently performed, what abuses, or what failures in a right improvement of health heretofore, might probably have provoked God, to cast me upon the bed of sickness, and bring upon me such extremity of suffering. I will thank the Lord for giving me warning by this affliction; but especially

cially for touching and softning my heart, and inspiring me with godly sorrow, and holy purposes. And to my own endeavours I will add my most earnest prayers, that the continuance of his grace may, out of this painful chastisement, produce the peaceable and blessed fruits of righteousness and faithful perseverance. To this end I will not fail, frequently to renew my good resolutions; to cherish and keep up in my soul all heavenly dispositions, by constant private prayer and serious reflection; by attending duly upon the publick worship; by reading and hearing, and conscientiously applying God's holy word to my present circumstances and necessities; by omitting none of the precious opportunities for strengthening my faith and other christian virtues, in the Sacrament of my dear Redeemer's Body and Blood. I will take heed to all my ways, be upon my guard against all temptations and occasions of sinning, I will be moderate in my most lawful pleasures and enjoyments, and diligent in all the duties, which the several relations wherein I stand, and the state of life to which I am appointed by providence, require of me. *I will set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, that I offend not in my tongue.* Ps. cxli. 3. and xxxix. 1. I will take heed, that I injure no man by thought, word, or deed; but will extend my charity, as I am able, to all mankind; to the poor afflicted members of my Blessed Saviour, by such succours, as their necessities stand in need of, and mine ability qualifies me to give; to others, by my good advice, and seasonable instruction; to all, by my prayers and good wishes, and the powerful motive of a pious example; And even to my enemies, by meekness and forgiveness, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath had compassion on me. I will endeavour

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your all in my power to become every day more in love with religion, and to make all with whom I converse so too ; that I may, in some measure give a check to the reigning vices of this degenerate age in which I live, and adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, or at least save myself from this untoward generation. In a word, I will be sure that the sense of God's mercies (of this last in particular) may never be blotted out of my mind ; but live, and grow, and bring forth fruit, and influence me powerfully to the very last hour of my life.

VI. Nor think, my soul, that any resolutions can be too strict, any endeavour too much, upon this occasion. For, *after all that is come upon me for my evil deeds, and for my great trespass, seeing that my God hath punished me less than my iniquities deserve, and hath given me such a deliverance as this ;* Ezra ix. 13. *Should I again break his commandments, would he not then be angry with me, till he had consumed me, so that there should be no escaping ?* verse 14. O Lord, my God, *thou art righteous, for I remain yet escaped ;* verse 15. but let not, I beseech thee, this mercy, by being forgotten or abused, turn to my utter and eternal condemnation. For, that this must be at last the sad consequence of such ingratitude, not only thy Word hath assured me, but I can painly gather it from my own reason and experience. I feel what indignation the unkindness of persons, whom I have particularly obliged, kindles in my breast ; I find, that no sort of resentment makes a deeper impression upon me, no provocation harder to be borne, than that, which arises from the injuries and the affronts of those ungrateful people, who take
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the advantage of my friendship to use me ill. And can I suppose, that the just and jealous God will not call them to a severe account, who turn his grace into wantonness, and, when they live by mere miracles of bounty and long-suffering, yet live so, as to dishonour him, and reproach the patience that spared them? The more signal and particular his goodness hath been, the heavier and more insupportable, no doubt, will be that *wrath, which hardened and impenitent wretches treasure up to themselves, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Rom. ii. 5. So that our blessed Lord's admonition to the impotent man, is in effect the voice of reason, and the call of every man's own conscience. Each affliction, every escape calling out aloud to the receiver, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* John v. 14.

And how indeed can it be expected, that infinitely worse should not come, when neither severity will compel, nor compassion and kindness lead to amendment, when neither correcting, nor sparing, can do any good? Dangerous are the circumstances of those men, whose distemper only is strong: But theirs must needs be desperate and mortal, whose very remedies feed and inflame their disease. If pruning and manuring be both in vain, the next sentence upon the barren fig-tree is, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* Luke xiii. The axe is already laid to the root, and if it be lifted up to give the fatal stroke, the end of every tree, which *bringeth not forth good fruit*, we are expressly told shall be, *to be burnt with unquenchable fire.*

VII. These things, and divers others, which will be ready upon such occasions to offer themselves, if apply'd well and closely to my conscience, will have

have a very great and happy power, in forming my disposition, and regulating my conduct, for the time to come. The recollection of God's abundant mercies will inflame my breast with holy gratitude and fervent love; such as would keep me ever passionately desirous, to pay the just tribute of my best service in return, and chearfully to run the way of his commandments. The remembrance of his judgments will possess me with an awful fear of displeasing him, and my own experience will convince me, that no flesh can stand before him, when he is angry. *Pf. lxxvi.* My late languishings and feeble condition, will be a seasonable and lively admonition, what this frail mortal nature is; these will teach me to die daily to the world, as a person, who hath here no continuing city, but ought to seek one to come. *Heb. xii.* A person, who must not, from even the most confirmed health, entertain any such fond prospects and vain confidences of long life, as may tempt me to suppose death and judgment are at a great distance, and myself secured again any surprise from them: Much rather ought I to expect them every moment; and, both from the daily spectacles of mortality in my neighbours, and the sensible decays, or sudden changes which happen to myself, quicken my preparation to meet that Lord, who hath compared himself to a thief in the night, and foretold us, that he will come in such an hour as we think not. *Matth. xxiv. 43, 44.* Thus shall I, by a true christian prudence, draw spiritual advantage out of temporal evils; discern the goodness and wisdom of Providence, even in the most afflicting dispensations; convert the pains and diseases of a vile perishing body, into instruments of strength and health to my immortal soul; and have a happy occasion of acknowledging with
Da-

David, that it is good for me to have been in trouble, ſince by that I have learnt, more diligently to practice, more ſtedfaſtly to perſevere in the ſtatutes of my God. Pf. cxix. 71.

H Y M N.

P*Raiſe the Lord, O my ſoul : and all that is within me praise his holy Name. Pf. ciii. 1.*

Praise the Lord, my ſoul : and forget not all his benefiſts. verſe 2.

Who can expreſs the noble acts of the Lord ; or ſhew forth all his praise ? Pf. cvi. 2.

Which forgiveth all thy ſins : and healeth all thine infirmities. Pf. ciii. 3.

Which ſaveth thy life from deſtruction : and crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindneſs. verſe 4.

Which ſatiſfieth thy mouth with good things ; making thee young and luſty as an eagle ? verſe 5.

For his arrows ſtuck faſt in me : and his Hand preſſed me ſore. Pf. xxxviii. 2.

There was no health in my fleſh, becauſe of his diſpleaſure : neither was there any reſt in my bones, by reaſon of my ſin. verſe 3.

My ſoul abhorred all manner of meat : and I was even hard at death's door : Pf. cvii. 18.

Then cryed I unto thee, O Lord : and got me to my Lord right humbly : Pf. xxx. 8.

I ſaid, O my God, take me not away in the miſt of mine age : as for thy years they endure throughout all generations. Pf. cii. 24.

But what profit is there in my blood : when I go down to the pit ? Pf. xxx. 9.

Hear my prayer then, O Lord, and with thine ears conſider my callings : hold not thy peace at my tears. Pf. xxxix. 13.

O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength: before I go hence, and be no more seen. Ps. xxxix. 15.

So when I cried unto the Lord in my trouble: he delivered me out of my distress. Ps. cvii. 19.

He sent his Word, and healed me: and I was saved from destruction. verse 20.

O! what great troubles and adversities hast thou shewed me, and yet didst thou turn and quicken me: Yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again. Ps. lxxi. 18.

Therefore will I praise thee and thy faithfulness, O God: verse 20. I will offer unto my God thanksgiving, and pay my vows unto the most High. Psal. l. 14.

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: They that go down to the pit cannot declare thy truth. Ps. xxxviii. 18.

But the living, the living he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known the goodness of the Lord. verse 19.

And they that know thy Name, will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee. Ps. ix. 10.

As for me, I will give great thanks unto the Lord with my mouth: and praise him among the multitude. Ps. cix. 29.

O come hither and hearken all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. Ps. lxvi. 14.

I was in misery, and like unto him that is at the point to die: Ps. lxxviii. 15. but he delivered me out of all my fear. Ps. xxxiv. 4.

If the Lord had not helped me: it had not failed, but my soul had been put to silence. Ps. xciv. 17.

But when I said, my foot hath slipped: thy mercy, O Lord, help me up. verse 18.

Thou

Thou haſt turned my heavineſs into joy : thou haſt put off my ſackcloth, and girded me with gladneſs, Pf. xxx. 11.

The Lord is my ſtrength and my ſhield, my heart hath truſted in him, and I am delivered : therefore my heart danced for joy, and in my ſong will I praiſe him, Pf. xxviii. 8.

O how plentiful is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that love thee : and that thou haſt prepared for them that put their truſt in thee, even before the ſons of men ! Pf. xxxi. 21.

O ye that love the Lord, ſee that ye hate the thing which is evil : the Lord preſerveth the ſouls of the faithful, he delivereth them from the hand of the wicked one. Pf. xcvi. 10.

His mercy and truth ſhall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the Houſe of the Lord for ever, Pf. xxiii. 6.

I will keep the ways of the Lord : and will not forſake my God as the wicked doth, Pf. xviii. 21.

For I have an eye unto all his Laws, and will not caſt out his Commandments from me, verſe 22.

Praiſed be the Lord, who hath not caſt out my prayer : nor turned his mercy from me. Pf. lxvi. 18.

Yea, bleſſed be the Lord God, even the God of Iſrael : which only doth wondrous things : Pf. lxxii. 18.

And bleſſed be the Name of his Majeſty for ever : and let all the earth be filled with his Majeſty. Amen, Amen.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

As it was in the beginning, &c.

After this Hymn, the Reader may enlarge his Meditations to the ſame purpoſe by repeating the xxx, lxxi, lxxvii, cxvi, cxviii. Pfalms.

A P R A Y E R.

O Most mighty GOD and merciful Father, wonderful in thy works, and gracious in all thy dispensations to the children of men; I thy unworthy servant prostrate myself before thee, with all the fervent affections of a grateful mind, acknowledging it is thy goodness, that I am not long ago consumed. *Thou, Lord, hast chastened and corrected me, but thou hast not given me over unto death.* Blessed therefore be that Divine Wisdom, which saw this late affliction seasonable, and would not suffer me to perish in my folly, for want of such necessary warning. Blessed be that tender compassion, which in the midst of wrath remembered mercy, which made all my bed in my sickness, which overlooked my impatience, and my many infirmities; and inclined a willing ear to the wandring and discomposed supplications of a poor feeble wretch, when he cried unto thee in his extreme anguish and distress. Blessed be thy holy Name for the powerful influences of thy Grace, which disposed my heart to consideration and repentance. But above all, blessed for ever be that Power and Goodness, which, by sparing me, when I had deserved to be utterly cut off, hath given me opportunity to make good these holy resolutions, which thy Grace inspired, when I was in trouble. Lord, let this goodness of thine, and my own serious purposes of amendment, never slip out of my mind; but, I beseech thee, preserve in me a constant tender sense of the indispensable obligations I lie under to better obedience. Make me every day more and more zealous in promoting thy glory, and the good of my brethren: As a person

ion saved from destruction, for this very end, that the remainder of my life should be employed in the service of my gracious Deliverer. In this sense, O my God, I humbly offer and present unto thee this soul and body, which thou hast mercifully rescued from hell and the grave; beseeching thee to keep them thine for ever. O let not the return of my health occasion a relapse into my former sins; but be the means to become an instrument of thy greater honour, of my own stricter and more steadfast virtue here, and my more exquisite happiness hereafter. O! that the talents of time and ability which thou hast given me to do good, which have been heretofore so wretchedly neglected, may (now they are afresh committed to my trust) be, for the time to come, so faithfully improved, that the shining graces of an exemplary conversation may hold some proportion with the blessings I have been so particularly favoured withal. Let these excite, not me only, but others also, by my example, to love thee more sincerely, to serve thee more chearfully, to trust in thee with greater confidence. In thee, O Lord, who *shewest us thy goodness so plenteously, and daily pourest thy mercy upon us*: Ps. lxxiii. 19. ix. 10. In thee, who *never failest nor forsakest them that seek thee*: Ps. lxxvii. 4. In thee, whose mercies are *sweet, whose loving kindness is better than life itself, whose service is perfect freedom, and in keeping whose Commandments there is exceeding great reward*, Ps. xix. 11.

To this end, sanctify, I beseech thee, all the dispensations of thy Providence to the salvation of my immortal soul; and especially, let not thy abused mercies ever rise up in judgment against me. O! may my past sufferings work in me
great

great humility and godly fear; that from them I may confirm my self in faith and patience, and an entire resignation to thy will, and wiser and better choices for me. Bring back frequently to my remembrance the promises and supplications, poured out in the bitterness of my soul; that those successful addresses to the throne of Grace may stir me up effectually, to the paying what I then so solemnly vowed. *Open thou my lips, O Lord, that my Mouth may declare thy mercy and truth as long as I live, and praise my GOD, while I have any being.* Ps. cvi. 33. And, forasmuch as this recovery is only the lengthening out a little that span of life, which must shortly have an end; suffer me not, I entreat thee, to forget that *I am a stranger upon earth*; but help me so to disengage my heart from these things here below, which my own late experience hath taught me, *cannot profit in the day of wrath*; that my hopes and affections may be unalterably fixed upon those better and eternal treasures, which thou hast prepared for them that love thee. Let my most serious thoughts and certain expectations of death and judgment be so continually, so powerfully impress'd upon my soul, that in *what hour soever the Lord shall come*, I may be found ready to meet him, and to go with him to the marriage. Even so, Blessed JESUS, grant me in such manner to *pass through things temporal, that I finally lose not the things eternal*; but that I may use and improve thy Grace here, till Grace at last be swallowed up in Glory, and I translated to the joys of my dear Redeemer. All which I beg for thy own Merits sake, my only Mediator and Saviour: To whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is most due, from me, and every

every other creature, all honour and glory, dominion and power, thanksgiving and praise, and humble adoration, henceforth and for evermore.
Amen.

M E D I T A T I O N VI.

Of Death.

I*T is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment.* Heb. ix. 27. So speaks the Spirit of God himself; and what is thus ordained, none can reverse, none can possibly escape. That then which remains for us, who lie under this sentence, to do, is only to endeavour, that we may die, as becomes men and Christians; that is, as persons, who expect to render an account of the things done in this body, and to receive a recompence accordingly, whether it be good or bad. But who may abide the terrors of that day? Or who shall stand when the Lord appeareth? Who indeed; when not only the thing itself, but the very apprehensions, and especially the approaches of it are so dreadful? For what is more terrible or shocking to mortal man, than dying; and what more so to sinful man, than being judged? But yet, my soul, since these must unavoidably come, let us see what course can be taken, what means be used to soften a little, and reconcile us to them: Nay, let us try, if it be not possible, not only to bear them contentedly, but even to entertain them joyfully.

II. If death be considered in itself, it is no more, than what all the living creation here below do and must undergo, in common with ourselves. And, what is dying? It is a ceasing to live, after the manner we now do. It is a removal, or rather an escape from a world of misfortunes and miseries; of sorrow and trouble, of malice, envy and deceit, noise and contention, of pains and anguish, of crosses and disappointments, of vanity and vexation; and, which is worst of all, of temptation and sin. It is doing that once for all, which we have been doing in part, a thousand times already; by sicknesses and faintings, by the decays and infirmities of nature; and by the loss of the nearest and tenderest relations, who tore away our very heart with them. In short, the present life, even to the prosperous, will be found, upon a just computation, to have made a very unequal distribution; for even such have a larger proportion of trouble, than of happiness. But to the generality of mankind, life is a rough tempestuous sea; and death is the making their port, or at least retiring into the shelter of a creek, where storms can no more disturb and annoy them. These are not affected strains of philosophy, but considered and approved truths; such as every man is, or may be, sadly convinced of, at his own expence. The only deceit arises from our natural fondness for living; which God hath wisely infused, and woven into our souls, that we might the better sustain our present calamities. As, on the other hand, he hath made faith of a future state our virtue, and ordained the miseries of the present life, as an exercise for that virtue; that both together might be a balance at least against the objects of sense; draw off our affections from a place, which was never intended for our rest or home; and raise our desires up to those better

better things, which were provided for us in another world. And surely, if this matter were well weigh'd, however timorous nature may start and boggle at first, yet it would be no difficult matter to come close up to death; and, by the help of familiar practise, and prudent pious meditation, to render not only the thoughts of it, but even the thing itself, very tolerable to us.

III. But, if we consider death in another view, as leading, and keeping us close prisoners, to the day of just and terrible judgment; thus it hath a sting indeed, which is the sense of guilt, and sin unpardoned. This is what nothing can relieve, but the comforts arising from true repentance, from a Saviour sacrific'd to expiate, and make full satisfaction for our offences, from a title to our part in that expiation, and favour of a reconciled God. And these, I humbly hope, are comforts which belong to me. For do but hear and observe, my soul, what reviving words the Holy Spirit hath spoken to this purpose. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John ii. 1, 2. Christ hath dy'd, who is he that condemneth? Yea, Christ is risen again, and seated at the Right Hand of God, a perpetual Intercessor, and a mighty Saviour to all them that come to God by him. *Rom. viii.* He hath told thee, that what the law and the flesh thro' infirmity could not do, Christ hath done for us; *Heb. ii. and iv.* that he knows and hath felt our weakneses, and will not fail to make large and very gracious allowances for them; *Rev. i. 5.* that Jesus hath washed us in his own Blood, and though our sins be as scarlet, yet, upon our true repentance they shall be white as snow. *Isa. i. 18.* Look up
T & t then

then, and see thy Lord coming in the clouds: Thou must be judged, 'tis true, but thy Redeemer shall be thy Judge. And to whose decision would'st thou trust thy cause, but to thy best friend's? To him, who loved thee so dearly, as to die for thee, to be made sin and a curse for thee, that thou mightest be made the righteousness of God in him? This is thy sure confidence; and heaven and earth may pass away, but his merits and promises will ever remain stedfast. And he hath promised, that all who repent and believe, and serve and love him, shall be saved in that day, and be where he is, to behold his Glory. *John* xvii. Nay, not only to behold, but to enjoy it; to live and reign with the Son of God himself. For such he hath made sons also, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in the heavens. *Rom.* viii. 17. *1 Pet.* i. 4. *1 John* iii. 2. And if I know, that I love God, I know, that I shall be with him, and be like him, and see him as he is.

IV. O glorious day, which shall bring me to the full and inseparable enjoyment of my dearest Saviour and most merciful God, when this veil of flesh shall be taken away, and spiritual joy, and peace, and knowledge, and love, shall for ever abound! Blessed be thy Name, O God, who hast opened an entrance into such bliss for poor repenting returning sinners! Blessed be thy bounty, who who hast ordained such an infinite recompence, for our imperfect and unworthy labours! And, if it is thy good pleasure that I must pass through the regions of darkness and death, to come at those mansions of light and glory; shall I grudge this passage? When I have borne the heat and burthen of the day,

day, ſhall I mourn, becauſe Even is come, and ſhrink back, when I am called to receive my wages?

Some difficulties, I am ſenſible, there are: But thou, O Lord, wilt ſtrengthen my faith, and not ſuffer me to faint, under the terrors and ſtruggles of my laſt trials. Give me grace, I entreat thee, to conſider, that this is the method, by which thy own Son and our Saviour was made perfect; that it is no more, nay, it is much leſs, than he ſuffered voluntarily, and for my ſake; that, by ſuffering death he hath overcome it, and rendered the conflict more eaſy to his beloved children that come after. Grant me to rejoice, at leaſt to ſupport myſelf, with the nearer proſpect of an eternal reſt and reward.

V. And do thou, O my ſoul, labour continually to get the better of thy own frailties and fears, with holy meditations, with the repeated exerciſes of faith and repentance, of truſt and love, and heavenly mindedneſs. Bid adieu to this vain world, and be ready to part with it chearfully. As for all that is uneaſy here, thank God for a deliverance from it; and for all, whom thou haſt reaſon to love and be concerned for, remember that thou leaveſt them under the conduct of the ſame good Providence, of which thy ſelf haſt had ſo large experience. Conſider that God will make up all relations, and is more than all, to thoſe that want them; and, if they continue to ſeek and ſerve him diligently, he will never forſake them, but be their God, and their guide, unto death. Bid all my friends weep, not for me, but for themſelves, who are ſtill in a ſtate of danger and temptation, of vanity and miſery, from which they that die in the Lord are everlaſtingly freed. Tell them, that we ſhall ſee one another

T t t 2

again

again shortly. And as I am going now to those dear and gracious souls, who have got the start of me in this journey; so they, and I, and all God's children, shall have a glorious, a joyful meeting, at the resurrection of the just. We shall all go together into a place, whence tears and mourning are for ever banish'd; where the vision of God, the service of the Lamb, the company of angels and saints shall minister eternal matter of praise and joy; and our happiness will exceed all we can conceive, all we can hope for. And now, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, thro' our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Therefore, my soul, be thou steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as I am assured that my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

EJACULATIONS.

WHile I am at home in the body, I am absent from the Lord; for I walk by faith, not by sight; therefore I am confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8.

Lord, whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee, Ps. lxxiii. 25.

My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is still my strength, and my life, and my portion for ever. Verse 26.

Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me, Ps. lv.

For the enemy of souls crieth out aloud, and the ungodly one cometh on fast; he is minded to do me some mis-

mischief, so maliciously is he set against me. But I am thine, O save me; I am bought with a price, O Jesus, even with thy most precious Blood. I am one of thy sheep, rebuke this ravening wolf, for thou art greater than he; and none is able to pluck me out of thy Hand. Ps. lv.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive my prayer; Thou that sittest at the right Hand of God, have mercy upon me.

Thou, Lord, art full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness; O deal not with me after my sins, nor reward me according to my iniquities. Ps. ciii. 8, 10.

Thou knowest whereof we be made, and rememberest that we are but dust. Look graciously therefore upon my weakness; pity the interruptions and imperfections of my prayers; pardon what I cannot now do with a steady and composed zeal, and accept the sincerity of my heart. Verse 14.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of my soul, shut not thy merciful ears to my prayers, but spare me, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer me not at my last hour for any pains of death to fall from thee.

Faithful is he that hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee: Lord, grant me the knowledge and sensible experience of this most gracious promise. Heb. xiii. Stand by me, and save me from the reproof of him that would eat me up. Ps. lviii. Deliver my soul from the roaring lyon, who goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Pet. iv.

*Lord, I commit my soul unto thee, as into the Hands of a faithful Creator, and most merciful Redeemer. 1 Pet. v. 8. Spare it, O God, and let it be thine in the day when thou makest up thy jewels. Mal. iii. In
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the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver me.

A P R A Y E R.

O Almighty Lord, Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, unto thee I fly for succour in this my great extremity; most humbly beseeching thee, to support and strengthen me in the last conflict of my life. Deliver me from the snares and terrors of the wicked one, sustain my agonies with the peaceful comforts of a quiet and good conscience, and of perfect reconciliation with thee, my God. Lord, as thou bringest me nearer to thyself, so let my love be more fervent, and my desires of thee be stronger. And O that it may please thee in thy abundant mercy, to afford me some sweet foretaste of future bliss, that I may triumph even in death itself: But if in this I err in what I ask; yet at least suffer not my faith to be shaken, nor thy loving-kindness to fail; and, however thou dealest with this corruptible body, let my soul, I most humbly beseech thee, be precious in thy sight. Wash it in the Blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, that, all its pollutions being purged and done away, it may be presented pure and without spot before thee, and be received into thy everlasting kingdom, thro' the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ, thy only Son, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

SHORT

SHORT EJACULATIONS

for the laſt Extremities.

I Believe, Blessed Jeſus, that thou ſhalt come to be my Judge; I therefore pray thee, help thy ſervant whom thou haſt redeemed with thy precious Blood.

O make me now to be numbered with thy ſaints in glory everlaſting.

The ſnares of death compaſs me round about, and its pains get hold upon me; Haſte thee, O God, to deliver me, make haſte, O Lord, to help me. *Pſal. cxvi. and lxx.*

Thy Kingdom come, O God, thy Will be done in earth as in heaven.

Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit.

Come Lord Jeſus, come quickly.

Theſe laſt Ejaculations, and following *Hymns* may be uſed by the Friends and Standers-by, with the neceſſary Alteration of the Perſon, after the ſick Party is diſabled from the Uſe of them.

H Y M N.

I.

WHEN riſing from the Bed of Death,
O'erwhelm'd with Guilt and Fear,
I ſee my Maker Face to Face,
O how ſhall I appear!

II. I

II.

If yet, while Pardon may be found,
And Mercy may be fought,
My Heart with inward Horror shrinks,
And trembles at the Thought.

III.

When thou, O LORD, shalt stand disclos'd,
In Majesty severe,
And sit in Judgment on my soul,
O how shall I appear!

IV.

But thou hast told the troubled Mind,
Who does her Sins lament,
The timely Tribute of her Tears,
Shall endless Woe prevent.

Then see the Sorrow of my Heart,
E'er yet it be too late;
And hear my Saviour's dying Groans,
To give those Sorrows weight:
Those Sorrows,
To give those Sorrows weight.

For never shall my Soul despair
Her Pardon to procure,
Who knows thine only Son has dy'd,
To make her Pardon sure:
Her Pardon,
To make her Pardon sure.

A HYMN on GRATITUDE.

I.

WHEN all thy Mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys;
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In Wonder, Love, and Praise:
O how shall Words with equal Warmth
The Gratitude declare,
That glows within my ravish'd Heart!
But thou canst read it there.

II.

Thy Providence my Life sustain'd,
And all my Wants redrest,
When in the silent Womb I lay,
And hung upon the Breast.
To all my weak Complaints and Cries
Thy Mercy lent an Ear,
E're yet my feeble Thoughts had learnt
To form themselves in Pray'r.

III.

Unnumber'd Comforts to my Soul
Thy tender Care bestow'd,
Before my Infant Heart conceiv'd
From whom those Comforts flow'd.
When in the slipp'ry Paths of Youth,
With heedless Steps I ran,
Thine Arm unseen convey'd me safe,
And led me up to Man.

IV.

Thro' hidden Dangers, Toils, and Deaths,
It gently clear'd my Way,
And thro' the pleasing Snares of Vice,
More to be fear'd than they.
When worn with Sicknes, oft hast Thou
With Health renew'd my Face ;
And when in Sins and Sorrows sunk,
Reviv'd my Soul with Grace.

V.

Thy bounteous Hand, with worldly Blifs,
Has made my Cup run o'er,
And in a kind and faithful Friend
Has doubled all my Store.
Ten thousand thousand precious Gifts
My daily Thanks employ ;
Nor is the least a chearful Heart,
That tastes those Gifts with Joy.

VI.

Through ev'ry Period of my Life
Thy Goodness I'll pursue,
And after Death in distant Worlds,
The glorious Theme renew.
When Nature fails, and Day and Night
Divide thy Works no more,
My ever grateful Heart, O Lord,
Thy Mercy shall adore.

VII.

Through all Eternity to Thee
A joyful Song I'll raise,
For oh ! Eternity's too short
To utter all thy Praise.

A PRAY-

A P R A Y E R.

*For the Pardon of Sin, and for ſanctifying
Grace.*

O LORD, rebuke me not in thine Anger, neither chaſten me in thy Diſpleaſure : Have Mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak, and my Soul is alſo fore vexed ; but thou, O Lord, how long ? Return, O Lord, deliver my Soul ; O ſave me for thy Mercies ſake ; for in Death there is no Remembrance of thee, or in the Grave who ſhall give thee Thanks ? I am weary of my Groaning, all the Night make I my Bed to ſwim : But thou, O Lord, wilt hear the Voice of my Weeping, thou wilt hear my Supplications, and receive my Prayer.

Unto thee, O Lord, do I liſt up my Soul ; O my God, I truſt in thee, let me not be aſhamed, let not mine Enemies triumph over me : Shew me thy Ways, O Lord, lead me in thy Truth and teach me, for thou art the God of my Salvation.

On thee do I wait all the Day long, therefore I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength. Thou art my Rock, my Fortreſs, and my Deliverer, my God, my Strength, in whom I will truſt. I will call upon thee, O Lord, in my Diſtreſs, even when the Sorrows of Death and Hell compaſs me about, for thou wilt hear the Voice of my Cry. Extend to me thy tender Mercies, and thy loving Kindneſs.

O remember not the Sins of my Youth, nor my Tranſgreſſions ; according to thy Mercy look upon me, for thy Goodneſs ſake, O Lord ; for thou wilt teach Sinners in the Way, and the Meek wilt thou
U u u 2 guide

guide in Judgment, and the Meek will he teach his Way. For thou, Lord, wilt extend thy Mercy and Truth to them that keep thy Covenant and thy Testimonies.

For thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine Iniquities, for they are great. The Troubles of mine Heart are enlarged, O bring thou me out of my Distresses, look upon my Affliction, and forgive all my Sin. Mine Eyes are ever towards thee; O Lord, turn thou unto me, and have Mercy upon me.

O keep my Soul and deliver me, let me not be ashamed; for I put my Trust in thee, O Lord, and will publish with the Voice of Thanksgiving thy loving Kindness, which is ever before me, I will declare all thy wondrous Works.

Grant this, O most merciful Father, for the infinite Merits of the Death and Passion of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, who is exalted as our High Priest, to the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins. Amen.

PSALM XXIII.

A PASTORAL HYMN.

I.

THE LORD my Pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a Shepherd's Care;
His Presence shall my Wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful Eye;
My Noon-day Walks he shall attend,
And all my Midnights Hour defend.

II. When

II.

When in the sultry Glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty Mountain pant,
To fertile Vales and dewy Meads,
My weary wandering Steps he leads;
Where peaceful Rivers, soft and flow,
Amid the verdant Landskip flow.

III.

Though in the Paths of Death I tread,
With gloomy Horrors over-spread;
My stedfast Heart shall fear no Ill,
For thou, O Lord, art with me still:
Thy friendly Crook shall give me Aid,
And guide me through the dreadful Shade.

IV.

Though in a bare and rugged Way,
Through devious lonely Wilds I stray;
Thy Bounty shall my Pains beguile,
The barren Wilderness shall smile,
With sudden Greens and Herbage crown'd,
And Streams shall murmur all around.

ON PSALM XCII.

H Y M N.

TIS good, our Thanks to God to bring,
And Praises to his Name to sing.
His Love the Morning shall recite,
His Faithfulness the fearful Night.

All Arts which Musick can invent,
 Harp, Psaltery, ten-string'd Instrument,
 His solemn Praises shall resound ;
 Whose Works with Joy my Head have crown'd.

How great the Works which God has wrought !
 And how profound his secret Thought !
 Fools to this Knowledge can't ascend,
 Nor brutish Man this comprehend.

When Sin like Grass grows strong and high,
 'Tis certain then the Harvest's nigh.
 God ever sits on high, and all
 His wicked Foes dispers'd shall fall.

Anointed with fresh Oil, my Horn
 Is strong, like that o'th' Unicorn.
 My Foes shall fall before my Eyes,
 My Ear shall hear their dying Cries.

The Righteous like a Palm are grown,
 Like Cedars spread on *Lebanon* ;
 Whom God in his own Courts does plant,
 They neither Fruit nor Blossoms want.

Thus is our God for ever just,
 Firm as a Rock, when him we trust.

A TRANSLATION of a HYMN

Composed in Latin.

A Almighty God, whose Majesty alone
 We do adore, Three Persons, Three in One,
 Whom only Angels in that heav'nly Choir
 With humble Rev'rence worship and admire :

Thy

Th' Almighty Breath, did all Things cauſe to be,
And by thy Pow'r preſerv'd them as we ſee.
The Earth thy Word, the Heav'ns obey thy Hand,
Thunder and Lightning wait on thy Command.
Spare us, O Lord! and waſh us clean, we pray,
Let not thy juſt Diſpleaſure us deſtroy.
For if our Sins with Juſtice thou ſhould'ſt weigh,
Or our Miſdeeds in Judgment ſhould'ſt repay;
What living Frame were able to ſuſtain
Thy juſt Diſpleaſure, in eternal Pain?
No, not that Fabrick formed by thy Hand,
And made perpetual by thy own Command.
To ev'ry Man the firſt Man Guilt convey'd,
And ev'ry one the ſame in Acts bewray'd.
But thou art he that loveſt Men to ſpare,
And not thy Juſtice with our Sins compare.
Thou did'ſt Rewards without Deſert diſpenſe,
And Punishment much leſs than our Offence:
For why? Thy Mercies all our Faults ſurmout,
To ſave th' unworthy Thou thy Praise doſt 'count;
Thine own Eleſt thy Love doth worthy make,
And pardon'ſt all their Sins for thy Son's ſake.
Look down, we beg, with a propitious Eye
On us, once ſervants, now thine Enemy;
For ſo we are, if thou mark'ſt what's amiſs,
Such of our life the ungrateful Product is.
Look on thy Gift, and not upon our Guilt,
Behold the Blood for us our *Saviour* ſpilt:
Thy firſt Creation did our Service claim,
But thy free Grace it doth us Children name:
Wretches, alas! this Title we diſgrace,
And by our Sins thy Mercy do deſace:
We would deſace, but Love doth us reſtrain,
Thy Love, that once beſtow'd is ne'er in vain:
For, Lord, thy Wiſdom other Ways did know,
To magnify thy Pow'r to us below.

But

But thou thy Glory from our Fall do'st raise,
And for Redemption, we thy Love must praise:
For that inclin'd the God of Love to leave
His Father's Bosom, us from Sin to save;
To die, to rise, and from his Side to send
Water and Blood, what *Adam* lost t'amend,
(Thy Wisdom and thy Love do so contrive
Through the worst Acts, the best for to derive.)
Thy Love and Favour we so little prize,
The Goodness which by Sins we do despise;
That Love and Favour did our Sins forgive:
That Goodness, we being dead, did make us live.
Vouchsafe, O Lord, our Hearts for to inflame
With love to him, that for us bore the Blame.
Vouchsafe that we may *Satan's* Yoke lay by,
And, hating Sin, become his Enemy;
O Lord, vouchsafe that we the Flesh resist,
And always in thy Love and Grace persist;
That when this mortal Course we shall have done,
And when our Souls before thy Judgment come;
Be, Lord, to us, beyond a Father kind,
But let not our Deserts a Judge thee find.

F I N I S.



